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Beyond Recognition: The Significance of External Legitimacy for De Facto States in the Global Arena

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the concept of external legitimacy and its implications for de facto states in the international system. Previous research on state recognition has primarily relied on United Nations recognition as a binary measure, neglecting the nuanced variation in the external legitimacy of de facto states. To address this gap, this study introduces a new *External Legitimacy Dataset* and develops a comprehensive measure of external legitimacy. Using this dataset, the study demonstrates the utility of the measure by providing latent estimates for 31 de facto states and predicting violence based on their level of external legitimacy. The results indicate significant variation between and within de facto states, emphasizing the importance of capturing this variation to understand the dynamics between de facto states, international organizations, and UN member states. Furthermore, the study identifies the key factors that determine the external legitimacy of de facto states, including regime type, international organization membership, recognition by a UN member state, Great Power support, territorial claims, and the presence of separatist movements in a region. To gain insights into the strategic choices made by de facto states in their pursuit of international recognition and domestic stability, the study conducts 35 semi-structured elite interviews with government officials from Somaliland and Kosovo. These interviews highlight the strategies employed by these states and the challenges they face in balancing recognition and survival. The findings reveal that both states invest heavily in security, socioeconomic development, and internal governance structures to ensure their survival. They also rely on informal diplomacy, regional organization integration, and strategic alignment with the West to gain external legitimacy. The research contributes to the field of international relations by providing a comprehensive understanding of the international conditions that influence the external legitimacy of de facto states. It emphasizes the need for more nuanced measures of statehood and recognition, and the importance of considering the interplay between external legitimacy and domestic stability. The dissertation sheds light on the complex dynamics of de facto states in the international system, offering valuable insights into the strategies and challenges faced by these states in their pursuit of recognition and survival.

Keywords

De facto states; External legitimacy; International recognition; Statehood; Geopolitics; Sovereignty; Violence; Kosovo; Somaliland

Summary for Lay Audience

In this research, I investigate the concept of external legitimacy and how it affects de facto states in the international system. De facto states are territories that function as independent states but are not recognized by the United Nations. Previous studies have mainly focused on UN recognition to capture their external relations, but my study introduces a new *External Legitimacy dataset* to capture the different levels of external legitimacy among de facto states. Using this dataset, I analyze the external legitimacy of 31 de facto states and its relationship with violence. The results show that there is significant variation in external legitimacy within and between de facto states. This highlights the complexities of their interactions with international organizations and UN member states. I identify several key factors that influence the external legitimacy of de facto states, such as the type of government, membership in international organizations, recognition by a UN member state, support from major powers, territorial claims, and the presence of separatist movements in the region. To gain further insights, I conducted interviews with government officials from Somaliland and Kosovo, two de facto states. These interviews reveal the strategies employed by these states to balance their pursuit of recognition and survival. They heavily invest in security, socioeconomic development, and internal governance structures to ensure their survival. They also use informal diplomacy, integration with regional organizations, and alignment with Western countries to gain external legitimacy. This research contributes to the field of international relations by providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the external legitimacy of de facto states. It emphasizes the importance of considering nuanced measures of statehood and recognition, going beyond a simple binary approach. The study also highlights the interplay between external legitimacy and domestic stability. Overall, this research

expands our knowledge of the international conditions that shape the external legitimacy of de facto states.

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1 Introduction

The relationship between the international status of de facto states and their functional capacity, both domestically and internationally, inspires a compelling and multifaceted inquiry. Understanding the extent to which their international status affects their ability to operate effectively requires a deeper exploration. Despite the limited recognition they receive, de facto states navigate a “paradoxical existence” where they strive to adhere to recognized state behavior while simultaneously challenging de jure borders (Pegg 2017; Broers 2013). However, much of the existing scholarship falls short of providing a comprehensive understanding of the status of these emerging state forms, often relying on a simplistic binary categorization that renders them as having an international non-status. Such an approach oversimplifies the complexities of de facto states' international status and fails to capture the nuanced nature of their interactions. To truly grasp these dynamics, a more comprehensive understanding of their status is necessary, taking into account how various attributes may interact and shape the process.

De facto states grapple with a multitude of challenges arising from their lack of recognition, which severely curtails their access to crucial benefits including legitimacy, decision-making power within international organizations, economic assistance, and physical security (Osterud 1997; Fazal & Griffiths 2014). The significance of these benefits often catalyzes violent and protracted conflicts. Devoid of formal recognition, de facto states frequently lack diplomatic ties with most recognized nations, impeding their ability to shape their domestic and international affairs. Despite these limitations, many de facto states actively engage with the international system and exhibit characteristics akin to recognized states. Nonetheless, substantial variations emerge in their international engagement and internal governance. Some, like Kosovo and Taiwan, confront highly politicized situations, whereas others, such as the Pridnestrovian Moldavian

Republic (PMR) (formerly part of Moldova) and Cabinda (formerly part of Angola), remain relatively isolated from the global community. Moreover, while certain de facto states like Somaliland (formerly part of Somalia) have embraced democratization and invested significantly in statebuilding, others, like Abkhazia (formerly part of Georgia), depend on external patrons to sustain their existence as independent entities. Although the specific challenges confronted by these states differ based on their degree of international engagement, they all navigate the complexities of functioning as state-like entities without the legal safeguards enjoyed by UN members. This absence of protection exposes them to the risk of being reintegrated into their recognized parent state (Fabry 2017). Stranded between statehood and non-recognition, de facto states are driven to prioritize their survival and actively pursue greater recognition. In their quest to attain these objectives, they employ a range of strategic approaches.

This dissertation endeavours to offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics shaping the relationship between the international status of de facto states and their survival. It is organized into three interrelated articles, each exploring distinct aspects of the subject matter. The first article delves into the concept of external legitimacy and undertakes a thorough examination of the international status of de facto states. Building upon this foundation, the second article identifies the key attributes experts consider crucial for de facto states' external legitimacy. Last, the third article delves into the delicate balance de facto states strike between their pursuit of external legitimacy and the imperative to uphold stability and security. By adopting a multi-faceted approach, this dissertation seeks to contribute significantly to a more nuanced understanding of the complex nature of de facto statehood.

This dissertation makes significant contributions to the existing literature by providing comprehensive answers to crucial questions through the meticulous collection and rigorous

analysis of data. The dataset utilized in this study is unparalleled, encompassing 31 de facto states over a period of 75 years. This comprehensive dataset captures 20 indicators that encompass their web of bilateral and multilateral relations, as well as the geopolitical conditions that shape and influence their international status. To further enhance the depth and breadth of the research, an elite survey of diplomats and academics was conducted, engaging a diverse group of 133 participants. This survey offers valuable insights into the key factors that define and shape a de facto state's international status. In addition to the quantitative analysis, this study also delves into the nuances and complexities of the topic through two in-depth case studies of Somaliland and Kosovo. These case studies provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the subject matter, benefiting from 35 semi-structured elite interviews with government officials from both states. Notably, the researcher undertook fieldwork, including travel to Kosovo, to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data and insights gained from this case study. This robust and multi-faceted research design ensures that the findings of this dissertation are grounded in a comprehensive and reliable empirical foundation.

This research unveils profound insights into the nuanced and evolving landscape of international acceptance for de facto states, uncovering substantial variations both across different states and over time. By challenging conventional approaches, this study transcends boundaries and offers valuable contributions to our understanding of the complex dynamics of peace and conflict in unrecognized states. The findings underscore the pivotal role of external legitimacy in shaping the behaviour and trajectories of de facto states. Notably, it is observed that de facto states that actively engage with the international community through conventional channels are more likely to garner acceptance from the international community. Engagement in international society, particularly through membership in international organizations, and recognition by a UN member

state emerge as critical factors for advancing de facto states along the spectrum of external legitimacy. To further illuminate the dynamics at play, this study delves into the intricacies of two illuminating case studies, Somaliland, and Kosovo. The study underscores the complex trade-offs and difficult choices that de facto states encounter, emphasizing their need to prioritize strategies aimed at greater recognition and integration, even at the potential expense of current survival initiatives, in order to secure long-term endurance in the international arena.

This work represents a significant breakthrough in the existing literature, bridging a crucial gap and offering profound insights that have direct implications for policymakers and scholars engaged in the fields of International Relations and Comparative Political Studies. Through examination of the international status of de facto states and a comprehensive analysis of the factors that shape their external legitimacy and internal stability, this study unveils essential dimensions that shed light on the acceptance and participation of these states in the global arena. By doing so, it enriches our understanding of the interplay between external legitimacy, peace negotiations, and the potential for violence inherent in these ‘frozen conflicts.’ This research not only situates de facto states theoretically and empirically within the global landscape but also challenges the prevailing notion of categorizing them solely based on their lack of international recognition. Instead, it emphasizes the significance of differentiating between the nuanced external relations of de facto states, leading to a better understanding of their intricate dynamics. In this regard, the study contributes to pressing debates within International Relations, encompassing fundamental concepts such as sovereignty, diplomacy, governance, system membership, and international order, by illuminating the precarious position that de facto states occupy in the international system. The research uncovers the calculated and often difficult decisions that de

facto states must navigate in order to achieve their objectives, providing invaluable insights and making a substantial contribution to the field.

The subsequent sections of this chapter are structured to offer a coherent overview of the scope and organization of the dissertation. The first section serves as an essential foundation by providing background information on the emergence of de facto states in the international system. Within this section, definitions of de facto states and related terms, such as external legitimacy and recognition, are clarified, while theoretical assumptions pertinent to this dissertation for understanding the international system are outlined. In the second section, the methodology employed throughout this research is discussed in detail. This encompasses an explanation of the data collection procedure for the dataset and conjoint experiment, and the rationale behind the chosen case studies. The third section succinctly presents an overview of the dissertation's structure, outlining the individual articles encompassed within it. This serves as a roadmap for readers, offering a clear understanding of the dissertation's organization and logical flow. Last, the concluding section delineates the scholarly contributions of this project. It underscores the significance of the research and expands upon how it advances both theoretical and empirical understanding of de facto states, contributing to the broader field of study.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Emergence of De Facto States in the International System

De facto states, as a relatively recent phenomenon, have emerged within the international system in the post-1945 era. To gain a comprehensive understanding of their emergence, it is crucial to contextualize their development and distinguish them from our conventional understanding of states. Extensive research in Comparative Politics and International Relations (IR) has been dedicated to unraveling the intricacies of state functions.

A foundational understanding of the state can be traced back to Hobbes and his concept of the state of nature. In 1651, Hobbes argued that the state's purpose was to maintain order and prevent a life that would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Leviathan i. xiii. 9). While this contractual view, where individuals surrender certain rights to the state in exchange for protection and order, continues to influence the literature on the state, Weber's conceptualization is often regarded as a starting point. According to Weber, the state is a political entity in which the "administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order" (Weber 1948, p.78). Thus, for Weber, a state's primary indicator is its ability to effectively control its territory and maintain order through the legitimate exercise of violence. Numerous scholars have relied on this Weberian understanding. In the late 1980s, as part of a broader effort to "bring the state back in," there was a renewed focus on comprehending the state as a powerful actor that shapes political and social phenomena (Evans et al. 1985, p.3). Within this movement, scholars such as Skocpol recognized that there was no need for a "refurbished" theory of the state (Evans et al. 1985, p.28). Tilly's (1985) bellicist theory of state formation revolves around the notion that the state's purpose is to possess a monopoly on violence. He argues that through warfare, a political organization establishes itself as the sole supplier of violence, coercion, and force within a given territory. From Tilly's work, we glean insights into the key attributes of a state, such as protection, military support, and fiscal and accounting structures.

The functions mentioned above are foundational to the core roles of states, but the study of the state extends far beyond these attributes. A vast body of literature has expanded upon and contested this minimal understanding, encompassing a wide range of topics. This extensive scholarly work explores issues such as the state's role in fostering nationalism, its interventions in

the economic market for development purposes, and the complex dynamics of state-society relations (Levi 1988; Migdal 1987; Wiarda 2003; Spruyt 1994). Of particular relevance to this dissertation is the literature that challenges the generalizability of the European state-making experience to other regions and historical periods. Scholars have observed that the experiences of newly formed states in the latter half of the twentieth century differ significantly from their European counterparts. For instance, Tilly's work suggests that the nature of states has evolved, with internal composition becoming less critical in explaining state formation, survival, or growth. He also highlights the absence of a recent "civilianizing process" due to the shift from internal to external state formation (Tilly 1975 p.49, 195).

Furthermore, in one of the earliest accounts that acknowledged the evolving criteria of statehood, Jackson, and Rosberg (1982, 1986) argue that African countries can retain their juridical status as states despite having persistent "empirical weaknesses" (1982, p.1). Their findings challenge conventional statebuilding theories, including the Weberian understanding that places greater emphasis on empirical statehood over juridical statehood. Jackson and Rosberg criticize these theories for conceptualizing states as "substantial entities" in which power is the "primary political arbiter" (1986, p.4). They highlight that, historically, empirical statehood was often associated with social Darwinism, where strong political entities became states through credibility and competition while weaker entities were excluded. However, there has been a "reversal of the classical historical pattern," with weak states now being "preserved by a benevolent international society" guided by norms of equality and morality (1982, p.16; 1986, p.3). In line with the work of Jackson and Rosberg, Spruyt (2007) argues that state-making experiences in the latter half of the twentieth century differ significantly from those of early European actors. This is primarily

due to a contemporary "state system where adherence to the principle of sovereign territoriality is sine qua non for international recognition" (2007, p.223).

Pegg's 1998 comparative work on the changing criteria of statehood deserves recognition for its significant contribution. Building upon Jackson and Rosberg's insights, Pegg conducted the first comprehensive study of de facto states. Pegg contends that the decolonization movement introduced a paradigm shift, initiating a "new sovereignty game" that redefined the parameters of statehood and diminished the importance of empirical statehood (1998, p.3). In the post-1945 era, many political entities attained statehood primarily based on their colonial predecessors, despite their apparent lack of empirical capabilities (Pegg 1998, p.3). Pegg argues that the norms driving decolonization have transformed the concept of statehood, deeming internal capacity less crucial and instead relying on the "new normative structures of international society" (Pegg 1998, p.1). Consequently, this "normative logic" has led to the emergence of two distinct categories: "quasi-states" and "de facto states." This normative logic refers to the prioritization of independence based on perceived moral rights rather than empirical viability, and the delegitimizing of territorial expansion and an emphasizing of the sanctity of borders (1998, p.1). These norms, which support quasi-states, present challenges for de facto states as the freezing of the political map and the politization of international recognition poses difficulties for groups aspiring to join the international system. Consequently, as Pegg aptly argues, a system has emerged wherein quasi-states are considered legitimate, regardless of their ineffectiveness, whereas de facto states are deemed illegitimate, regardless of their effectiveness (1998, p.3).

Supporting this perspective, significant research in International Law (IL) and IR has further substantiated the notion of shifting criteria in international state formation. In IL, two schools of thought on statehood prevail: the declaratory theory and the constitutive theory. The

declaratory theory reflects the state recognition process prior to 1945 and emphasizes the empirical attributes of statehood. It contends that recognition is primarily based on the internal conditions and "pre-existing factual situation" of a state, with normative values playing a minimal role (Ryngaert and Sobrie 2011, p.469). In contrast, the constitutive theory aligns more closely with contemporary recognition practices and highlights the juridical elements of statehood. It posits that recognition is a predominantly normative process, grounded in conditions external to the state (Ryngaert and Sobrie 2011, p.469). Scholars associated with the constitutive school argue that meeting the legal parameters outlined in the *Montevideo Convention* is insufficient for state recognition.¹ They contend that a state only becomes recognized as such when acknowledged by other legitimate states. This theory is based on the legal principle of *consensual jus gentium*, which asserts that a state achieves its status through the agreement and consent of other states (Ryngaert and Sobrie 2011 p.469).

Stephen Krasner's work from 1999, 2004 and 2013 also challenges the conventional understanding of sovereign statehood in the international system. Krasner argues that numerous entities exhibit different combinations of recognition (international legal sovereignty), autonomy (Westphalian/Vattelien sovereignty), and effective governance (domestic governance).² He criticizes social theories and declaratory IL theories for oversimplifying the complex process of state formation. According to Krasner, this process is influenced by a range of conflicting norms, principles, and instrumental structures of authority and legitimacy. Importantly, Krasner asserts

¹ This includes a) a permanent population b) a defined territory c) a government d) a capacity to enter into relations with other states.

² The principle of Westphalian/Vattelien sovereignty embodies the fundamental tenet that states should refrain from intervening in the internal affairs of other states, representing the cornerstone of non-intervention in international relations.

that recognition is shaped by the considerations of key state actors, including economic, security, and political factors.

Other IR scholars emphasize the growing significance of "realpolitik" factors in determining state recognition. Osterud's (1997) study on three major historical waves highlights the intrinsic connection between gatekeeping and the modern evolution of the state system. As he notes, the principle of "systemic organization" provides a deceptive sense of clarity, as statehood criteria have often been inconsistent, and the concept of sovereignty remains politically contested (Osterud's 1997). In the current international order, powerful states establish criteria for new states to join the club. Coggins' (2014) research offers a valuable dataset on secessionism and Great Power recognition, arguing that recognition is a cause rather than a consequence of statehood. International recognition is subjective and influenced by external political considerations, predominantly driven by powerful states, rather than objective measures of governmental capacity. Coggins finds that international determinants, such as the considerations made by influential external actors, play a more significant role in determining why a state gains international recognition than its inherent domestic-level effects. Furthermore, recent literature in IR discusses the concept of *engagement without recognition*, acknowledging the presence of various states and state-like entities in the international system that exhibit different degrees of political autonomy and social acceptance (Ker-Lindsay 2015; Ker-Lindsay and Berg 2018).

Research in comparative politics, IL, and IR illustrates that the emergence of de facto states can be attributed to the evolving criteria of statehood and the separation of a state's internal sovereignty and capacity from its external recognition. Since 1945, several influential factors have contributed to the decoupling of internal capacity and external recognition, resulting in a recognition system based on normative and political considerations largely independent of a state's

internal capabilities. Consequently, novel forms of states, such as de facto states, have emerged, challenging traditional notions of the state. De facto states can exhibit a range of capacities and perform state functions internally, yet they possess a subordinate status internationally due to a lack of unanimous recognition. In the following section, I will provide a definition of de facto states and explore both their internal operations and external relations.

1.1.2 Defining De Facto States

De facto states, a relatively recent phenomenon in the international system, pose challenges when it comes to their conceptualization and classification. Pegg (2017) highlights that one of the major obstacles in studying these entities is the prolonged terminological and definitional debates that have hindered scholarly progress. These issues revolve around the choice of terminology, the definition employed, and the criteria considered. Various terms have been used to refer to these entities, including "pseudo-states," "states-within-states," "unrecognized quasi-states," "informal states," and "contested states" (Kolossoff and O'Loughlin 1999; Spears 2004; Isachenko 2012; Geldenhuys 2009; Ker-Lindsay 2015; Kyris 2015). This research will adopt the term "de facto states" for its conceptual clarity: while these political entities function as "de facto" states, they lack a "de jure" status (Pegg 2017).

Pegg's seminal book (1998) provides the initial definition of a de facto state. According to Pegg, a de facto state is characterized by an organized political leadership that rises to power with some level of indigenous capability, garners popular support, and possesses the capacity to deliver governmental services within a specific territorial area while maintaining substantial control for an extended period (p.26). This definition aligns with the fundamental attributes of a state. However, the crucial distinction between a state and a de facto state lies in the latter's lack of "substantive recognition," rendering it "illegitimate in the eyes of the international society" (Pegg

1998 p.26). It is important to note that the “substantive recognition” is not explicitly defined in this work and can likely vary greatly.

To address the ambiguity of Pegg's definition, scholars have sought to establish more comprehensive definitions of de facto states. Caspersen (2012) defines de facto states as political entities that have attained de facto independence, exercise control over at least two-thirds of their territory, establish their own institutions, seek international recognition, and have sustained existence for a minimum of two years. However, Caspersen considers cases such as Kosovo and Taiwan as borderline instances due to their substantial recognition. Despite such efforts, Pegg (2017) acknowledges that there has been a "considerable amount of discussion devoted to precisely defining these entities, with limited improvements to justify these endeavors." Furthermore, in the past decade, scholars have increasingly relied on a simplified understanding of de facto states. Lynch (2004, 15) defines de facto states as secessionist entities with an "empirically defined claim to statehood," while Toomla (2016) states that de facto states are "entities that fulfill the Montevideo criteria for statehood but lack international recognition." Many scholars in recent research have adopted a similar definition as a starting point in their work. Florea's (2014) criteria for de facto states include seven key points:

1. The entity must belong to, or be administered by, a recognized country but should not be a colonial possession.
2. The entity should have declared independence or demonstrated aspirations for independence through a referendum or a "sovereignty declaration."
3. The entity must exert military control over a territory or portions of the territory that are inhabited by a permanent population.
4. It should not be sanctioned by the government.

5. It should perform at least basic governance functions, such as the provision of social and political order.
6. It lacks international legal sovereignty, which refers to recognition from a simple majority of UN Security Council permanent members plus recognition from a simple majority of UN members.
7. It must exist for at least 24 months.

While simplistic definitions of de facto states help clarify their fundamental aspects, they fall short in distinguishing between political entities that are de facto states and those that are not. This dissertation adopts Florea's (2014) criteria for defining de facto states. The decision to utilize Florea's more flexible definitional criteria stems from the need to study a broader spectrum of de facto states, accounting for variations in their level of external relations and internal capacities. This inclusive approach encompasses states such as Kosovo and Taiwan, often excluded from studies due to their partial international recognition, as well as entities like the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, which possesses a parallel government outside its claimed territory. It also encompasses entities exhibiting different degrees of reliance on external actors, ranging from states like Luhansk Peoples Republic and Donetsk Peoples Republic, highly dependent on their external patrons for survival, to relatively isolated or independent states like Cabinda and Somaliland. Given that the primary objective of this work is to comprehend the dynamics between external and internal relations of states, a more flexible definition proves indispensable in capturing these political entities with varying levels of external interaction and dependency. By shedding light on de facto states that wield international agency, those that are isolated or dependent, those with

diverse internal capacities, and those that face partial recognition or complete ostracism, this research provides a comprehensive framework for studying these political entities.³

As Florea expands upon in his codebook, the minimal definition is a significant advancement in differentiating de facto states from groups that do not seek independence, warlord territories, territories under the control of paramilitaries, separatist movements that lack control of territory, micro-states, colonies functioning before independence, and several others. It allows us to study a range of de facto states by including the minimal definition of basic governance functions. Although Florea extensively justifies the inclusion of his population of 34 states in his codebook, three states have been excluded from this study. Firstly, Gagauzia was removed as its objective was not independence but rather consistently advocated for increased autonomy (Chinn and Roper 1998). Secondly, Eastern Slovenia and the Gaza Strip were omitted during the data collection stage due to conceptual ambiguities that made it challenging to differentiate them from more prominent de facto states in their respective regions, such as Krajina and Palestine. Consequently, the analysis focuses on a population of 31 de facto states, as illustrated in **Table 1**. To ensure consistency and comparability in the analysis, Florea's designated time span for these states is also adopted. Through this meticulous dataset refinement, this analysis aims to provide a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of de facto states.

³ The functioning of many de facto states often hinges on the support of an external patron, while some manage to maintain complete independence. Therefore, the inclusion of the level of dependency as a defining criterion for de facto states was deemed unnecessary.

Table 1.1 De Facto State Time Coverage

<i>De Facto State</i>	<i>Start Date</i>	<i>End Date</i>
Katanga	1960	1963
Biafra	1967	1970
Krajina	1991	1995
Chechnya	1991	1999
Anjouan	1997	2008
Tamil Eelam	1984	2009
Rwenzururu Kingdom	1963	1982
Bougainville	1975	1997
Aceh	2001	2005
Karen	1948	2020
Kachin	1961	2020
Mindanao	1973	2020
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	1974	2020
Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic	1974	2020
Cabinda	1975	2020
Casamance	1982	2020
Abkhazia	1991	2020
Kurdistan	1991	2020
Artsakh	1991	2020
Somaliland	1991	2020
South Ossetia	1991	2020
Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic	1991	2020
Republika Srpska	1992	2020
Palestine	1995	2020
Taiwan	1971	2020
Eritrea	1964	1993
East Timor	1975	2002
Kosovo	1998	2020
South Sudan	1975	2012
Donetsk Peoples Republic	2014	2020
Luhansk Peoples Republic	2014	2020

1.1.3 Defining International Status and Survival

The primary objective of this dissertation goes beyond exploring the factors that lead de facto states from non-recognition to formal UN recognition. Instead, it seeks to discern the significant elements that propel them along the external legitimacy spectrum. It is crucial to distinguish between the concepts of external legitimacy and recognition, as both pertain to the status of states in international relations. Recognition entails being acknowledged as an equal sovereign state by other legitimate states, while external legitimacy pertains to the extent to which a de facto state is accepted as a political entity with the authority to engage in international interactions. Recognition

is binary and often unidirectional, whereas external legitimacy exists on a spectrum and can be bidirectional. This means that a de facto state's external legitimacy can both increase and decrease over time, whereas formal recognition is often irreversible.⁴ Furthermore, while recognition primarily applies to UN member states, the scope of external legitimacy in this dissertation is strictly confined to de facto states. The concept of external legitimacy will be further elucidated in the subsequent article. By delving into the intricacies of external legitimacy, this dissertation aims to enrich our understanding of de facto states and their position within the international system, making a significant contribution to the field.

Furthermore, although lacking a formal definition, scholars have often juxtaposed the concept of survival with state "disappearance" (Florea 2014), "state death" (Fazal 2008) or "state failure" (Goldstone 2008). From this perspective, survival can be understood as the sustained existence of a de facto state. Within the literature, certain attributes of survival have been identified, including the ability to "maintain a military balance against the parent state" and the shared perception among citizens that the state is "as inherent as natural elements like rivers and mountains" (Florea 2014; Bakke et al. 2014; Migdal 2001, p. 168). In a broader sense, the components that constitute survival relate to the internal capacity and internal legitimacy of the de facto state. There is noteworthy scholarship examining how states can strengthen their statebuilding (internal capacity) and nation-building (internal legitimacy) endeavours, both of which contribute to ensuring the survival of a de facto state. This will be expanded upon in the third article.

⁴ However, as will be discussed in Article 1, the external legitimacy of a de facto states rarely decreases below its initial level.

1.1.4 Assumptions about the International System of States

This project is based on four assumptions about the international system of states, informed by social theories in IR, particularly the constructivist perspective. Constructivism emerged in the late 1980s within the broader post-positivist movement that challenged positivism's dominant position in IR. Post-positivists believe that unobservable things, such as beliefs, principles, and ideas, are not just "theoretical fillers" and should, therefore, be accounted for in our study of IR (Ruggie 1998). Constructivism not only acknowledges but also goes beyond studying material considerations. It asserts that the system's critical structures are intersubjective rather than material, and even the most durable institutions can be based upon collective understandings. Constructivists frequently refer to the presence of norms, identity, and discourses in understanding different concepts and "realities" within IR. In developing the assumptions for this project, I rely on the key tenets of the constructivist theory. By using this theoretical framework, I aim to offer a nuanced understanding of the factors that shape the behaviour of de facto states and their interactions with the international system.

The first assumption underlying this project is the existence of an international community of states where states are the primary actors. This community is not defined by shared language, religion, or government, but rather by a formal unity of independent political communities pursuing their own ways of life within recognized boundaries (Nardin 1983). Acknowledging the significance of state actors and their distinct societies with unique values, interests, and goals, this assumption seeks to enhance our understanding of the dynamics within the international community.

The second assumption posits that the international system of sovereign states operates as an exclusive club, where external integration and adherence to norms are crucial for participation.

Within this club, states are formal equals, possessing rights and the freedom to choose their alliances, rivals, and adversaries (Onuf 2013). Social acceptance plays a central role in becoming a member of this club, often influenced by more powerful states (Coggins 2014). Membership is contingent on the prevailing norms of the time, which may prioritize the protection of territorial integrity for established states or legitimize the self-determination of nations within countries (Onuf 2013). By recognizing the significance of norms and legitimacy, this assumption provides a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and exclusivity of the international community.

The third assumption builds upon the idea that the criteria for statehood underwent a significant transformation after 1945, decoupling a state's internal capacity from its external legitimacy. This project assumes that the nature of statehood and sovereignty has evolved, leading to the emergence of new state forms alongside traditional recognized states (Philpott 2001). The assumption acknowledges this shift, highlighting that a state's internal capacity may not necessarily determine its external legitimacy. By considering this altered dynamic, this assumption aims to offer an updated understanding of the state system and the challenges posed by new state forms in the international community.

Drawing from the preceding assumptions, the final assumption posits that a state's actions or inactions stem from its own identity, which is shaped through intersubjective social structures and its perception in relation to other actors (Adler 1997; Wendt 1992; Kratochwil 2000; Onuf 2012). This assumption recognizes that a state cannot determine its goals until it establishes its identity (Wendt 1999). De facto states, constantly reminded of their precarious existence through exclusion from the international community, strive to solidify their position while simultaneously attempting to enhance their capabilities as fledgling states. This often creates tensions for de facto

states, requiring them to navigate between survival and external legitimacy. The strategic choices made by de facto states depend on their material circumstances and their self-perceptions in relation to other actors. By acknowledging the significance of identity and perception in state behavior, this assumption seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the motivations and actions of de facto states in the international system.

1.2 Research Design

This dissertation employs a rigorous multimethod research design (Seawright 2016) consisting of multiple steps within each article to provide a comprehensive analysis. The first article focuses on constructing and evaluating a latent measure of external legitimacy by compiling data from government websites and national and local news sources. This comprehensive dataset includes 20 indicators of external legitimacy across 31 de facto states from 1945 to 2020. Utilizing a Bayesian item-response theory (IRT) model, a new continuous measure of the latent degree of external legitimacy is estimated. This innovative measure aligns closely with the continuous conceptualization of legitimacy and provides a principled measure with uncertainty for all de facto states over time. This approach offers a robust framework for understanding the complex phenomenon of legitimacy in international relations.

The second article conducts a comprehensive examination of factors influencing perceptions of external legitimacy. Through a fully randomized conjoint experiment and rank-order component, a survey is administered to 133 English-speaking adults, including 42 diplomats and 91 academics. Diplomats are selected based on Moyer and Markle's (2018) *Relative National Power Dataset*, while academics are identified through a JSTOR search of relevant publications. Expert perceptions of external legitimacy and potential subgroup differences are evaluated using the approach of Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley (2020) to estimate marginal means. Non-metric

preference scaling is employed to analyze rank-ordered data and identify factors that increase external legitimacy perceptions. By utilizing six indicators and the marginal means from the forced-choice question in the conjoint survey, legitimacy scores are predicted for nine contemporary de facto states from 2005 to 2020. The selection of these states, including Kosovo, Taiwan, Abkhazia, PMR, Somaliland, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, South Ossetia, Artsakh, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, is based on geographical range, diverse domestic situations, and complete data coverage across the six indicators. This approach aims to provide an objective and accurate reflection of perceived legitimacy for contemporary de facto states according to expert assessments.

The third article presents two in-depth case studies, on Somaliland and Kosovo, conducted through 35 semi-structured elite interviews with government officials from both regions. The interviews were conducted using various methods such as in-person interviews, telephone interviews, and Zoom video calls. The interviewees consist of public servants and elected officials, including Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and government officials from foreign affairs and executive offices. The selection of Kosovo and Somaliland is based on their differing levels of international engagement, development, and regional contexts. These case studies offer valuable insights into the strategic decision-making processes of de facto states regarding their legitimacy and recognition within diverse international and domestic contexts.

Detailed descriptions of the research design for each article are provided within the text and expanded upon in supplementary files in the appendices. These files include documents such as the Pre-Registration plan for the survey, interview guide for the case studies, and data collection details of the *External Legitimacy Dataset*, which offer in-depth information on the methodological approaches employed in this study. By providing these documents, this research

enhances transparency, reproducibility, and understanding of the specific techniques utilized in this comprehensive analysis.

1.3 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation comprises three interconnected articles that delve into the external relations and status of de facto states, thereby shedding light on the complexities of balancing their primary objectives: pursuing international legitimacy while ensuring their continued existence.

The first article introduces a comprehensive approach to understanding the role of external legitimacy in de facto states. Drawing from existing literature, the study defines and contextualizes external legitimacy, providing a concise account of these states' international interactions. Using the innovative *External Legitimacy Dataset*, which encompasses 20 indicators across 31 de facto states from 1945 to 2020, the study employs a Bayesian IRT model to estimate the dynamics of external legitimacy. The findings reveal substantial variations in external legitimacy between and within de facto states over time. Additionally, the study demonstrates the practical utility of this measure by illustrating that de facto states with lower levels of external legitimacy are more prone to resort to violence. This can be attributed to their sense of isolation and limited options for self-preservation, making violence a more plausible strategy. The multimethod design employed in this study showcases the diverse levels of de facto state legitimacy and the empirical relevance of external legitimacy in predicting violence.

Building upon the insights from the IRT model, the second article advances a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the dynamics surrounding the international status of de facto states. This article seeks to answer two pivotal questions: what attributes do experts consider important in influencing international status, and to what extent do these factors contribute to variations in the international status of de facto states? Employing a multimethod

design, the study reviews the recognition literature and analyzes international practices since 1945 to identify the key factors impacting a de facto state's international status. Subsequently, an elite survey of diplomats and academics (N=133) is conducted to examine the attributes that contribute to external legitimacy. The survey confirms that factors such as regime type, membership in international organizations, recognition by a UN member state, Great Power support, territorial claims, and separatist movements significantly influence external legitimacy. Moreover, a non-metric preference scaling analysis of rank-ordered data reveals subgroup differences based on respondents' region and profession. To identify states with varying perceived legitimacy, the study predicts external legitimacy for nine contemporary de facto states based on the results of the conjoint experiment. By utilizing data on actual de facto states, this approach mitigates potential cognitive and ideological biases associated with direct questioning. The findings provide valuable insights into how academics and diplomats perceive the external legitimacy of de facto states and emphasize the importance of distinguishing between de facto state external relations rather than categorizing them solely based on their lack of international status.

The third article critically evaluates the strategies employed by two de facto states, Somaliland, and Kosovo, in their pursuit of international recognition and domestic stability. Through a comparative analysis, the paper highlights the nuances between their approaches, considering their differing levels of international engagement and the consequential impact on their trajectories. Furthermore, it demonstrates how both entities face similar challenges in balancing strategic goals despite their varying levels of external legitimacy. The study reveals that Somaliland and Kosovo frequently prioritize strategies aimed at seeking greater recognition and integration, sometimes at the expense of current survival initiatives, with the hope of achieving long-term endurance. This analysis underscores the complex trade-offs de facto states must

navigate to safeguard their interests and emphasizes the necessity of adopting a careful and nuanced approach to address their unique challenges.

1.4 Contributions of the Dissertation

This dissertation represents a significant contribution to the literature on de facto states, offering a comprehensive analysis of their relations and complex position within the international system. It deepens our understanding of the challenges faced by de facto states, particularly the delicate balance between their persistence and the principle of sovereignty. The research highlights the crucial role of external legitimacy in their pursuit of greater recognition and integration into the global arena, shedding light on the dynamics and tensions involved.

One of the key strengths of this dissertation lies in its nuanced perspective on the strategic choices made by de facto states. It illuminates the complex nature of their situation and explores the calculated and often costly decisions they must make to achieve their long-term objectives. This analysis provides invaluable insights into the difficult choices and challenges faced by de facto states as they navigate the international system. Furthermore, the dissertation challenges the conventional policy of non-recognition, arguing that engagement can offer a more effective means of resolving international conflicts. It underscores the limitations of isolationism and dependency on a single external patron and provides policy recommendations for de facto states to make informed strategic decisions.

The study also introduces a novel dataset and measure of external legitimacy, offering scholars a valuable tool to better understand the complex dynamics of de facto state relations. This contribution paves the way for further investigations into the complexities of statehood, the international interactions of states, and the role of violence, positioning de facto states at the forefront of studies on peace and conflict. Moreover, the dissertation serves as a crucial resource

for policymakers and scholars alike, providing a new framework for addressing the challenges faced by contested states and offering insights towards sustainable solutions through integration.

In summary, this dissertation makes significant contributions to our understanding of de facto states in the international system. It provides critical insights into their complex position and the key factors that shape their external legitimacy. By offering a novel perspective, introducing innovative datasets and measurements, and deepening our understanding of de facto state international status and its interplay with internal legitimacy and statebuilding, this research is poised to significantly advance scholarly comprehension of the intricate dynamics of de facto state relations. This deeper understanding will undoubtedly facilitate a more comprehensive analysis of the subject matter, providing valuable insights for researchers.

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2 Shouting in the Dark? Introducing the External Legitimacy Dataset

2.1 Abstract

International state recognition represents the most powerful organizing principle in international relations. Despite its importance, scholars have limited themselves by predominantly employing United Nations recognition as a single binary measure of international statehood. Existing approaches thus fail to empirically capture the variation in the external legitimacy of de facto states and thereby obscure important dynamics between de facto states, international organizations, and UN member states. To address this, I introduce a novel *External Legitimacy Dataset* (1945-2020) and a new measure of this concept. I demonstrate the utility of the new dataset by (i) providing latent estimates for 31 de facto states and (ii) demonstrating its empirical utility by predicting levels of violence. Robust results indicate the validity of the measure, and substantively, I find that there is significant variation between and within the de facto states. Moreover, I find that external legitimacy consistently predicts the recourse to violence by de facto states. These findings demonstrate that leveraging more nuanced measures of international system participation reveals the understudied yet integral ways in which de facto states interact internationally and how this integration may contribute to peace and conflict.

2.2 Introduction

De facto states have a highly complex existence. They are unrecognized as sovereign states, yet they control territory, can develop robust institutions, and have limited bilateral and multilateral interactions with other states (Pegg 2017; Caspersen 2011; Ker-Lindsay 2015; Huddleston 2020). They often functionally resemble a state and can have varying degrees of external relations, but they lack international legal protection, which heightens the risk of their forceful reintegration into their recognized parent state. Given the importance of sovereignty as an organizing principle in international relations (IR), de facto states and their international interactions are a historically understudied state form in the field (Kolsto 2006; Ker-Lindsay 2015). This lack of attention is particularly problematic given the centrality of de facto states in past and current conflicts. These conflicts are often violent, as exhibited in recent cases of Russia's recognition of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic as independent and sovereign states from Ukraine in February 2022 and in the ongoing conflicts between Israel and Palestine and Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Artsakh. However, the contemporary cases of Taiwan, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and Kosovo demonstrate how the politics of these states can deeply influence international affairs in causing contention that falls short of direct violence.

While de facto states are important actors in the international system, our understanding of their external relations is limited by insufficient operationalization and empirical investigation. De facto states can often operate externally as states, and, like UN members, they are firmly embedded in the fabric of IR. Seminal work has been carried out that assesses how recognized states engage with de facto states; however, scholarship still often relies on a binary understanding and measure of recognition (Berg and Toomla 2009; Ker-Lindsay and Berg 2018; Huddleston 2020). This approach categorizes political entities into 'haves,' UN member states who have recognition, and

`have nots,' all other entities without formal state system membership.⁵ Solely relying on formal UN membership prevents us from gauging the complexity of de facto states' interactions, which can help us better understand their role in the international system and how this affects their internal dynamics. As a remedy, this article introduces the *External Legitimacy Dataset*, which offers a more nuanced representation of de facto state external relations. This dataset provides the most complete and detailed account of the external legitimacy of de facto states to date.

This article presents a comprehensive approach to understanding the role of external legitimacy in de facto states. The study begins by defining and contextualizing external legitimacy within the existing literature on de facto states, providing a concise account of de facto state international interactions. Using the novel *External Legitimacy Dataset*, which includes 20 indicators of external legitimacy for 31 de facto states from 1945-2020, the study estimates a Bayesian item response theory (IRT) model of external legitimacy, producing a continuous and principled measure (with uncertainty). The findings reveal significant differences in external legitimacy between and within de facto states over time. The study further illustrates the practical utility of this measure by demonstrating that de facto states with lower levels of external legitimacy are more likely to resort to violence. This can be attributed to their sense of isolation and limited options for self-preservation, which makes violence a more reasonable strategy. The study's multimethod design demonstrates the variation in the levels of de facto state legitimacy and the

⁵ Notable exceptions exist to this see: Coggins 2011; Kolsto 2006; Ker-Lindsay 2015; Huddleston 2020.

empirical usefulness of external legitimacy for predicting violence. By understanding and measuring the degree of acceptance and participation of de facto states, researchers will be better equipped to uncover how external legitimacy might play a role in peace processes and the onset of violence in these ‘frozen conflicts.’ This project advances important debates in IR research about conflict, territorial disputes, system membership, and international order by better situating de facto states, theoretically and empirically, within the international landscape (Kolsto 2006; Coggins 2011; Ker-Lindsay 2015; Huddleston 2020).

2.3 External Legitimacy and De Facto States

Despite often having considerable capacity, de facto states are in a position where they must lobby members for entry into the exclusive club of states (Osterud 1997; Fazal and Griffiths 2014). As such, external acceptance represents the single most important objective of de facto states, alongside their survival (Berg and Vits 2020). While several studies have sought to understand the internal composition of de facto states since the late 1990s, the comprehensive analysis of their external relations is a newer area of research.⁶ Rather than treating the external relations of these unrecognized entities as homogeneous, scholars are increasingly recognizing that de facto states can interact in the international system to different extents and that this engagement can often be telling of the politics and processes surrounding them (Berg and Toomla 2009; Ker-Lindsay 2015; Toomla 2016; Berg and Pegg 2018; Ker-Lindsay and Berg 2018). They convey that de facto states operate in the international system and experience different levels of political autonomy and social acceptance. The concept of *engagement without recognition* is based on the notion that recognized

⁶ For the internal dynamics of de facto states see: Kolsto 2006; Nina Caspersen 2011, 2018; Florea 2014, 2017.

states can simultaneously engage with a de facto state through a "spectrum of activity" while keeping firm on their policy of non-recognition (Ker-Lindsay 2015; Ker-Lindsay and Berg 2018). Ker-Lindsay and Berg (2018) find that far from being excluded, there is "wide variation in the way in which de facto states engage with the outside world."

There are two prominent examples of scholarly attempts to empirically capture this engagement. First, Berg and Toomla (2009) introduced the *Normalization Index*, which aims to understand how de facto states "establish themselves in international society. The *Normalization Index* is an important advancement, but it does not capture the concept of external legitimacy as proposed in this article. Indicators used in the *Normalization Index*, such as state communications and postal service, help identify a state's capabilities but not how other states perceive and interact with them, nor the de facto state's degree of participation in the international system. Huddleston's (2020) Bayesian hierarchical latent variable model of *Continuous Recognition* constitutes a noteworthy contribution to our comprehension of recognition, as he conceptualizes it as a continuous rather than a binary concept. He characterizes official recognition as the last domino to fall in the foreign policy process, existing along a continuum in which third-party states confer secessionist movements with varying levels of recognition. The indicators for this model revolve mainly around a triadic relationship between a third-party state (e.g., the US), the host state (e.g., China) and the aspiring state (e.g., Taiwan). In *Continuous Recognition*, the status of the aspiring state is determined by how the third-party state perceives the host state. Therefore, if they have unfavourable opinions towards the host state, the recognition they confer to the aspiring state is higher, and vice versa. While *Continuous Recognition* captures certain bilateral relations of de facto states, this article aims to uncover their place within the international system as a whole. Moreover, external legitimacy is based on observable outcomes rather than subjective intentions.

Although the parent and de facto states are often closely related, this measure does not tether the aspiring state's legitimacy to sentiments towards the parent state.

2.3.1 Defining External Legitimacy

Building from this important work, I introduce the concept of external legitimacy. External legitimacy is conceptualized here as *the extent to which a de facto state participates and is accepted within the international system*. Participation and acceptance do not require a formal acknowledgment of sovereignty from UN member states; they only require recognition as political entities with authority to interact in the international system. Moreover, external legitimacy is not based on an explicit foreign policy choice by a recognized state; therefore, intent does not have to be identified. External legitimacy captures the outcome of a recognized state's interaction with a de facto state rather than the state's intentions towards the de facto state. Although there can never be "accidental recognition," theoretically, external legitimacy can be accidental (Ker-Lindsay 2015). For example, recognized countries can interact with de facto countries by signing trade agreements to boost economic growth and diversity without having any intention of increasing their legitimacy. Like Huddleston (2020), I theorize external legitimacy to exist on a spectrum, which allows us to order de facto states by their degree of external legitimacy; however, I conceive of external legitimacy as an analytically distinct phenomenon from international recognition rather than the last domino to fall on the spectrum. This is important to note, as de facto states can have a high level of external legitimacy and never transition to become recognized states, while some de facto states can have a low level of external legitimacy and achieve recognition. Further, while formal UN recognition is predominantly granted in perpetuity, de facto states' external legitimacy is not guaranteed and has the potential to increase and decrease over time. Moreover, while formal recognition is based solely on whether a state is a UN member, external legitimacy comprises three

components: bilateral relations, multilateral interactions, and geopolitical factors. These components are empirical indicators that reveal the degree to which a de facto state is accepted and participates in the international system at any particular time.

Bilateral relations demonstrate the extent of external legitimacy conferred through interactions with other countries and comprise five areas of association. Declared recognition represents the most formal and explicit act of external legitimacy and perhaps the most impactful. Official recognition from a UN member to a de facto state has far-reaching implications. Scholars have often likened the international community of states to that of an exclusive club (Osterud 1997; Coggins 2011; Fazal and Griffiths 2014). With this illustration, official recognition given by a UN member to a de facto state is a vouching for or attestation of the de facto state's state-like character. It is a public showing of the UN member states' support for the de facto state to be accepted as a member of the club. Diplomatic exchanges, the physical exchange of representatives between states, are also critical to bilateral relations. This exchange can be formal or informal. Within the context of de facto states, it is often informal; however, several informal representative offices function like an embassy in all but an official designation. These offices indicate a commitment to bilateral relations and, in turn, a degree of acceptance of the de facto states. The third sub-component of bilateral relations is military support. Support can come from weapons, troops, logistics, funding, and safe havens. Military support can be an important resource for the survival and maintenance of the territorial boundaries of the de facto state (Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham 2011). Another important aspect of bilateral relations is trade. Strong trade relations between two states represent openness, mutual trust, and a willingness to interact with one another (Mansfield and Pevehouse 2000). The last sub-component is bilateral treaties. When a state is party

to a treaty with a de facto state, they are signaling that they recognize the legitimacy of the de facto state to interact in the international system as a political entity.

The second component of external legitimacy is multilateral interactions. Multilateral interactions demonstrate the extent of acceptance and participation of de facto states in intergovernmental contexts. Three sub-components encompass multilateral interactions. The first is international organization (IO) participation which demonstrates the ability of the de facto states to carry out normal state functions and allows them to interact with other recognized states. Membership helps de facto states gain allies and provides opportunities for them to petition to be recognized. It also illustrates acceptance (or partial acceptance, if not a full member) by a group of states. Joining international and regional organizations entitles de facto states to a "collective recognition" by a group of states, indicating greater external legitimacy (Snow and Cull 2020). The second sub-component of multilateral interactions is sports associations and federations. Like IO membership, belonging to sports associations allows the de facto state to interact with other states in multilateral contexts and carry out normal state functions. Last is multilateral treaties. Treaties, as mentioned above, signify acceptance of the de facto state and a means to strengthen relations. In multilateral contexts, this can be between multiple states or a treaty between a de facto state and an IO.

The third component of external legitimacy is geopolitical factors which comprise three sub-components. Geopolitical factors are the critical contextual factors surrounding the de facto state. Compared to the first two components, which are predominantly based on observable actions, geopolitical factors are based on observable international and domestic conditions for each de facto state. First is Great Power support, which can often accelerate a prospective state's external legitimacy and recognition (Coggins 2011, 2014). Great Powers support de facto states' legitimacy

in various ways, including arms, materials, training, and troops which can help protect the de facto state territory (Siroky et al. 2021). Great Powers can provide funding to the de facto state to help build up its capacity, which can also help ensure that they look more like a state. Great Powers can also help push the agenda for de facto states on the international stage. The second sub-component of geopolitical factors is the presence of another separatist group in the region. A justification for not accepting these states is the belief that recognition or engagement can incite a "domino effect" in which successful separatists within a state encourage or revitalize the efforts of other separatist movements. As a result, de facto states are likely to be more accepted if these interactions are not perceived as inciting an involuntary opening of a "pandora's box" (Bereketeab 2015). The last sub-component of geopolitical factors is territorial claims. An inherent and guiding principle of the liberal international order is respect for territorial integrity (Zacher 2001). Many post-colonial states have used this logic, dating from the 1950s to the end of the 1980s. The United Arab Republic, made up of modern-day Egypt and Syria, the Mali Federation, composed of modern-day Senegal and French Sudan, and the Senegambia Federation, composed of modern-day Senegal and the Gambia – these were all able to dissolve and create their own countries. The legal concept of *uti possidetis* (meaning "as you possess") guided these dissolutions (Laoutides 2015). This legal convention was not restricted to Africa, as the norm was reinforced in the aftermath of the former Yugoslavia. Consequently, a territorial claim is considered an important indicator of external legitimacy.

To evaluate the external legitimacy of de facto states, I created a dataset of 20 indicators, of which four were taken and updated to 2020 from other sources, and 16 were collected for this project. The *External Legitimacy Dataset* includes observations for 31 de facto states from 1945 to 2020. A full list of the de facto states included in the dataset is available in the Supplementary

Information (SI) file Section 1.2 in Appendix A. The variables included in the dataset and the sources I relied on are listed in SI file Section 2 and are drawn from the previous theoretical section.

2.4 Empirical Applications

2.4.1 Latent Variable Analysis

Insofar as external legitimacy is best understood as a latent, continuous concept, Bayesian item response theory provides the most appropriate framework for leveraging multiple observable indicators to produce a single measure of the unobservable concept (Fariss 2014, Girard 2021). The model helps us observe the meaningful differences between de facto states at different levels of external legitimacy while simultaneously incorporating temporal trends.⁷ To assess the dimensionality of the external legitimacy measure, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used. The results, available in SI file Section 4 of Appendix A, strongly suggest that the latent trait is unidimensional, supporting the use of a unidimensional item response theory (IRT) model. Additionally, a convergent validity test was conducted by correlating indicators of statebuilding with the latent trait. The results, available in SI file Section 6.2 of Appendix A, demonstrate that 13 of the 15 indicators positively correlate with external legitimacy, meaning that the new measure is valid.⁸

Figures 1-5 display the results of the latent model for the 31 de facto states grouped by region, revealing variation both between and temporally within de facto states. This empirically

⁷ For additional information about the model specification, including the choice of priors for each parameter, refer to SI file Section 3 in Appendix A.

⁸ I rely on Albert's (2022) Rebel Quasi-Institutions Dataset. I include fifteen indicators of statebuilding that cover a state's security apparatus, social provisions, and, more generally, its institutions. Descriptions of the variables used in this model and their coding can be found in the SI file Section 6.2 in Appendix A.

corroborates my conceptualization of external legitimacy, namely its gradational nature.

Table 2 summarizes the discrimination parameters for each item in the model, reflecting the strength of the relationship between each indicator and the underlying latent dimension. Notably, IO membership and declared recognitions are the strongest indicators of external legitimacy, while exchange in a de facto state and external military support are the weakest.

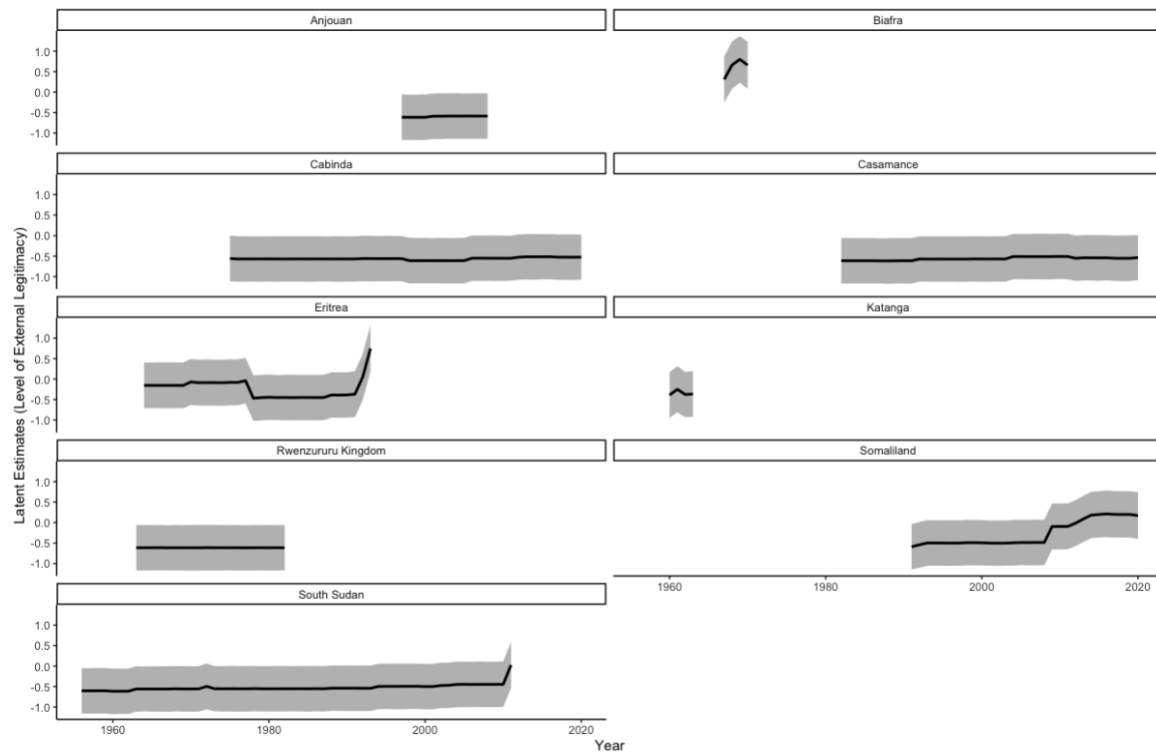
De facto states with high external legitimacy, like Taiwan and the SADR, on average, have more than 10 declared recognitions, over 20 formal exchanges abroad and 10 in their state, belong to more than one IO, and participate in several treaties. Conversely, de facto states with low external legitimacy, such as Republika Srpska, Katanga, and South Sudan, typically lack formal interactions, have 2-3 external military supporters, a handful of states who fund them, fewer than five informal diplomatic exchanges, and no relations with IOs.

Table 2: Latent External Legitimacy Discrimination Parameters

<i>Indicator</i>	Estimate	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Standard Deviation
Formal Representation De Facto State	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00
Declared Recognition	0.97	0.93	1.02	0.02
Informal Representation De Facto State	0.60	0.53	0.66	0.03
Formal Representation Abroad	1.02	0.98	1.05	0.01
Informal Representation Abroad	0.57	0.51	0.64	0.03
Exchange Abroad	0.15	0.08	0.22	0.03
Exchange De Facto State	0.05	0.00	0.12	0.03
Trade Partners	0.50	0.43	0.56	0.03
Arm Trade Partner	0.61	0.55	0.67	0.03
External Funding	0.11	0.01	0.21	0.05
Sports Associations	0.62	0.56	0.68	0.03
Membership in IOs	0.87	0.82	0.92	0.02
Partial Member in IOs	0.66	0.60	0.72	0.03
Observer in IOs	0.53	0.46	0.59	0.03
External Military Support	0.04	0.00	0.12	0.03
Treaty Bilateral	0.69	0.63	0.75	0.02
Treaty Multilateral	0.35	0.28	0.42	0.03
Territorial Claim	0.24	0.18	0.31	0.03
Great Power Support	0.30	0.22	0.37	0.03
Separatist in Region	0.30	0.15	0.46	0.07

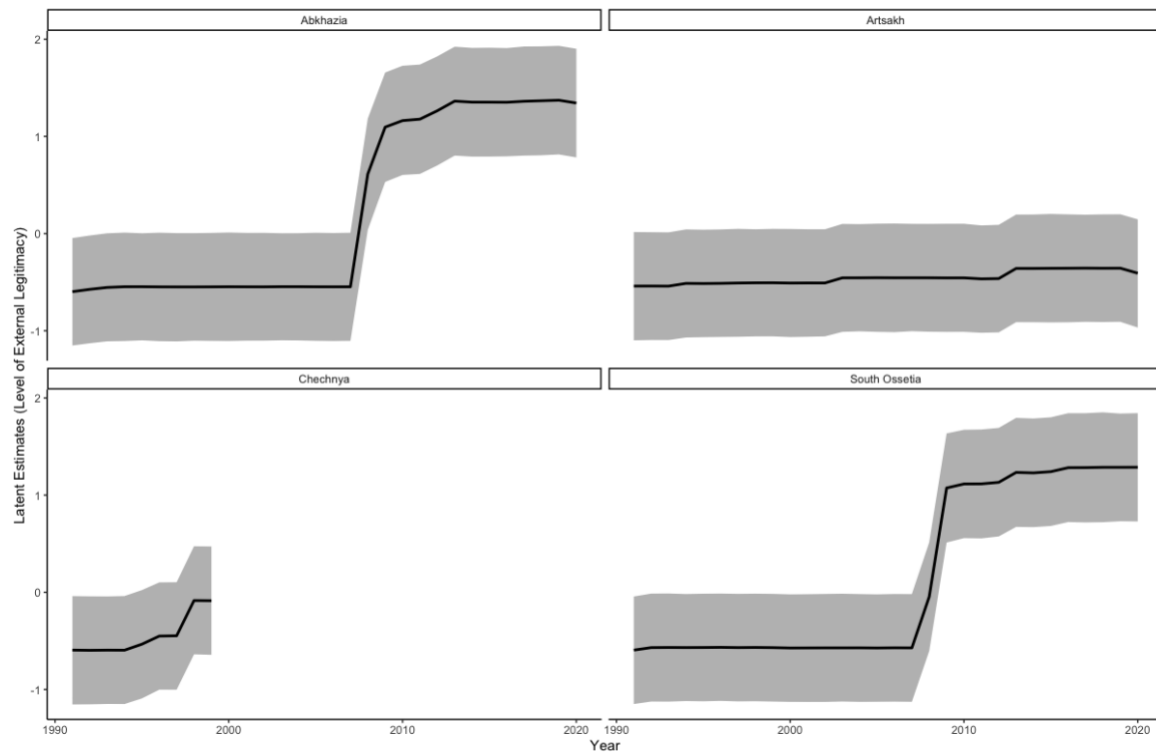
The credible interval for these items are set at 95%. Point estimates are the posterior mean. "Formal Representation De Facto State" is set deterministically to 1 to assist with model identification.

Figure 1: Latent External Legitimacy - Sub-Sahara Africa



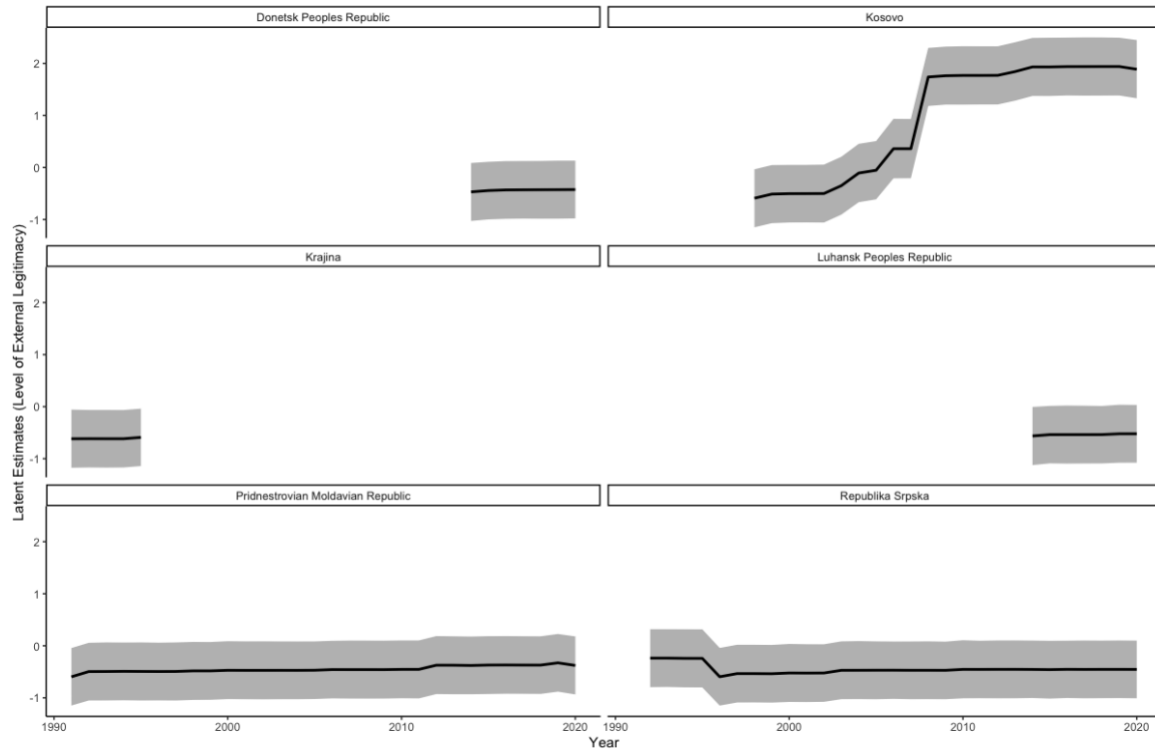
Point estimates represent the median value from the posterior distribution of latent estimates. Shaded regions denote 95% percent credible intervals.

Figure 2: Latent External Legitimacy - Central Asia



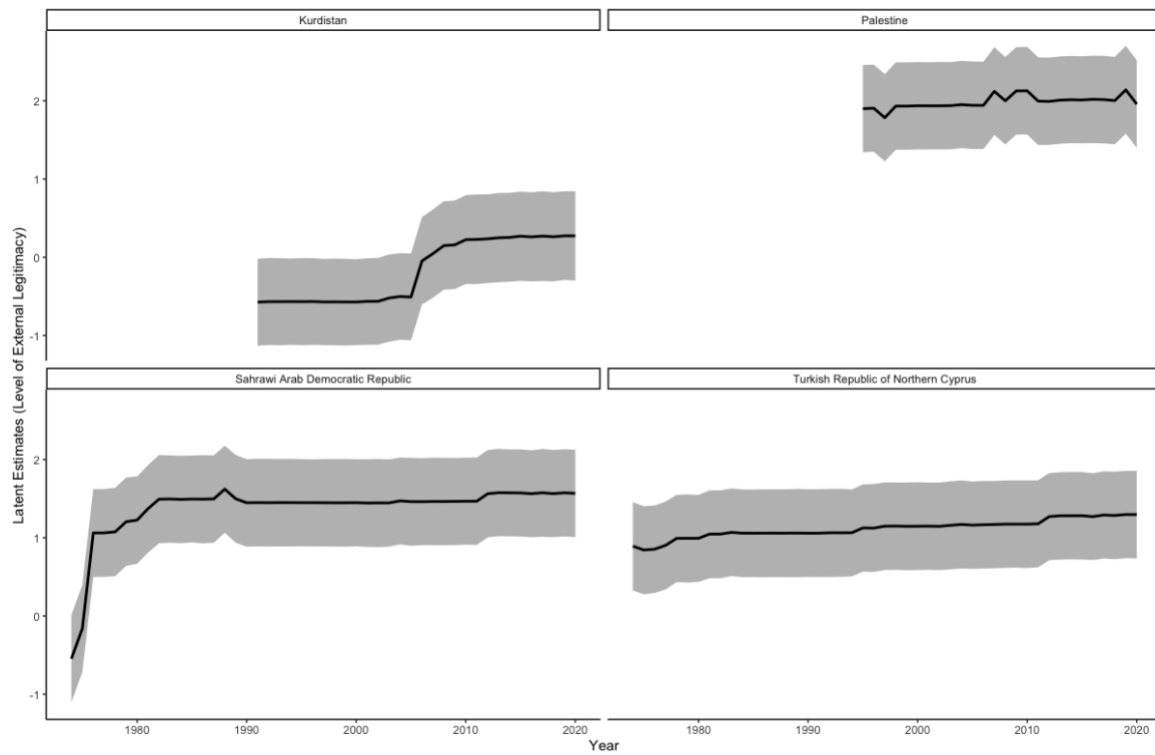
Point estimates represent the median value from the posterior distribution of latent estimates. Shaded regions denote 95% percent credible intervals.

Figure 3: Latent External Legitimacy - Europe



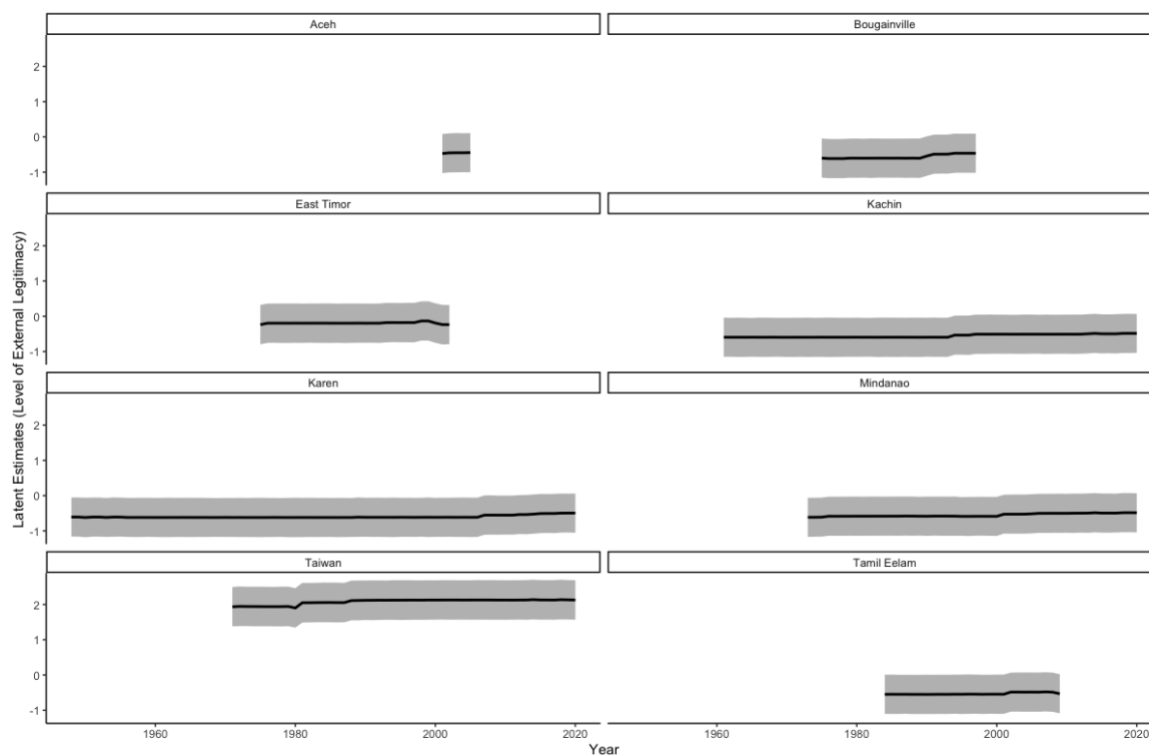
Point estimates represent the median value from the posterior distribution of latent estimates. Shaded regions denote 95% percent credible intervals.

Figure 4: Latent External Legitimacy - Middle East and North Africa



Point estimates represent the median value from the posterior distribution of latent estimates. Shaded regions denote 95% percent credible intervals.

Figure 5: Latent External Legitimacy – Southeast Asia and Oceania



Point estimates represent the median value from the posterior distribution of latent estimates. Shaded regions denote 95% percent credible intervals.

Substantively, the results provide several interesting insights into the external legitimacy of de facto states. Temporally, we can see that many country estimates vary. Rather than having the same null level of non-recognition, many of these states have different degrees of external legitimacy at different points in time. For most de facto states, external legitimacy never decreases below its initial level. Small fluctuations notwithstanding, if they survive, de facto states will have their lowest levels of external legitimacy when they enter the international system. This could be on account of several factors. For one, de facto states often emerge out of violent secessionist conflicts. Thus, for the first few years captured in the dataset, they might still be negatively impacted by war which could discourage recognized states from engaging with these disruptive political entities. As Bakke et. al (2018) finds, de facto states often have to convince both their

citizens and the world that they have transitioned from “war-makers” to “state-makers.”

Second, upon establishment, de facto states often initially prioritize strengthening their internal governance structures, resulting in limited capacity for an active foreign policy engagement.⁹ However, as time progresses, through investments in their state apparatus and external relations, de facto states seem to gradually adopt characteristics resembling recognized states, rendering them more acceptable within the international community.

This reasoning finds support in the estimates presented in **Table 2**, where higher levels of external legitimacy among de facto states are associated with a common attribute: engaging in "conventional interactions" within the international system. The indicators strongly associated with external legitimacy, namely formal representation abroad, declared recognition, and participation in international organizations, are themselves considered conventional and established practices. The term "conventional interactions" encompasses formal practices and participation that are codified and recognized as legitimate avenues for engagement. Conversely, "informal interactions" refer to ad hoc, unofficial, and unsanctioned practices or participation in the international arena. For instance, a conventional interaction may involve the establishment of an embassy, representing an official and recognized form of representative exchange. In contrast, an informal interaction could manifest as a liaison abroad, representing a less formal and unofficial exchange. While informal interactions can contribute to the enhancement of external legitimacy for de facto states, it is noteworthy that conventional interactions hold greater significance and carry more weight for capturing external legitimacy.

⁹ As Dembinska and Campana (2017) note, “The viability and relative endurance of some de facto states would depend, beyond the impact of the regional and international contexts, first and foremost on the political processes of state-capacity-building and their resonance with the population” (p. 260). Therefore de facto states are often engaged in developing internally first.

The distinction between conventional and informal interactions highlights the diverse strategies adopted by de facto states to engage with the international community. This observation emphasizes that the majority of de facto states, from their very establishment, acknowledge the crucial importance of international engagement, and work to mirror recognized states. To accomplish this, they must emulate recognized state behavior and pursue conventional avenues to secure formal bilateral recognition and establish relationships with UN member states. These ideas are reflected in the interactions exhibited by de facto states across varying levels of legitimacy.

Those who are largely excluded from the international system, with the lowest levels of external legitimacy, often have no conventional relations and few informal interactions. Republika Srpska, for example, has comparatively low external legitimacy and is one of the only de facto states whose external legitimacy drops below its initial level. Historically, Serbia and Montenegro recognized and supported Republika Srpska, but this was the extent of their interactions. In 1996, with the signing of the *Dayton Accords*, Republika Srpska lost this support and was formally incorporated into Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since then, Republika Srpska has had consistently low external legitimacy, lacking conventional interactions and informal relations.

Somaliland actively and informally participates in the international system yet has few conventional interactions. Despite an upward trajectory, it has a comparatively low level of external legitimacy owing to its absence of conventional relations. There are some fluctuations, however, given that it does have several informal exchanges, such as informal liaison offices abroad. While Somaliland may not be conventionally interacting, its many informal avenues of interaction contribute to its slow but steady increase in external legitimacy.

The TRNC is an interesting case in that it is often considered a "pariah" in the international system, yet its degree of participation and acceptance is comparatively high (Bartmann 1999; Cook

and Sherwood-Randal 2006; Featherstone 2000). Its relations, however, are only with a select few states. Turkey is the only state to formally recognize the TRNC, and this support has often been considered vital for its survival (Kolsto 2006). The TRNC also has several informal relations with states in the Gulf Region. The TRNC is an observer in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and participates in many of its affiliate summits and unions. While they might only interact with a select group of states and therefore appear to be largely excluded from the international system, these few relations have contributed to their higher degree of external legitimacy.

Finally, there are de facto states like Kosovo, which have been able to interact somewhat conventionally within the international system. Though Kosovo did not have a high level of external legitimacy initially, it has steadily climbed upward as its informal relations were substantiated by formal conventional relations. In 1998, during the war, the state received informal support through external funding, military aid, and support from Great Powers. In 2008, Kosovo declared independence and was subsequently formally recognized by 31 UN member states. Despite a handful of derecognitions, Kosovo's external legitimacy remains high due to several conventional interactions, including formal relations with recognized states, diplomatic exchanges, and participation in IOs.

2.4.2 External Legitimacy and Violence in De Facto States

In this final section, I assess the empirical utility of my dataset and measure of external legitimacy by exploring the relationship between external legitimacy and the onset of violence in de facto states. As de facto states often emerge in a post-war context, the legacy of violent conflict continues to shape the political dynamics of these states, and de facto states tend to heavily invest in their military apparatuses (Kolsto 2006). There is, however, likely variation in the propensity of de facto

states to rely on violence as a means of achieving their objectives. The degree to which de facto states might engage in violent activity is likely to be influenced by their level of external legitimacy.

The factors contributing to the variation in the use of violence among de facto states are likely numerous, yet only a few articles examine this.¹⁰ It is probable that external legitimacy would be a significant factor in decisions made by de facto states to resort to violence. Those with higher levels of external legitimacy are more likely to be cognizant of the detrimental effects that using violence would have on their international image or reputation.¹¹ Moreover, de facto states possessing a higher degree of external legitimacy are more likely to be integrated into the international community, which may serve as a form of mediation to resolve disputes and dissuade them from taking up arms. Such states also have the benefit of things such as military support, financial assistance, membership in international organizations, and backing from a Great Power, which can reduce their “threat environment” and discourage a parent state from reabsorbing the de facto state (Florea 2020). Conversely, de facto states with lower external legitimacy are often in a vulnerable position where they might have a handful of allies but are, for the most part, ostracized from the international system. As such, this creates a more salient threat, which can leave them open to aggression from their parent state and can result in their use of violence as a means of self-preservation (Florea 2020).

¹⁰ Florea (2020) identifies the role of external military support and peacekeeping forces as a way to reduce the reliance on violence in de facto states. Furthermore, Cunningham (2013) provides an excellent account of the variation in strategies of resistance of secessionist movements more broadly.

¹¹ Several scholars, including the seminal piece by Walter (2006), have explored reputational concerns from the perspective of the parent state. However, it is likely that de facto states would also have concerns for their reputation, given their innate desire to gain greater legitimacy. As Dembinska and Campana (2017) and many others note, de facto states work to follow the ‘rules of the game’ in the international community.

I hypothesize that de facto states with lower levels of external legitimacy are more likely to resort to violence. This is likely due to their greater isolation from the international community, which can amplify the threats and potential discrimination faced by de facto states, resulting in an increased reliance on violent means. When de facto states possess lower levels of external legitimacy, this often translates into having limited allies, no countries invested in their conflict resolution, minimal support from international organizations, and no third-party actors facilitating dialogue with the parent state. In such situations, their sovereignty is more likely to be jeopardized, thus heightening the likelihood of violence.

In order to gain insight into the relationship between external legitimacy and violence, I used a Bayesian Time-Series Cross-Sectional multilevel logistic regression to estimate three models, each with the binary dependent variable of onset of separatist violence in a given year from Sambanis et al. (2017) *SDM Dataset (1945-2012)*.¹² The independent variable for latent external legitimacy was included in all models, as well as a cubic polynomial for year(s) since last violence. The first model included variables from the *SDM Dataset*, which captured the de facto state access to state power and the geographic features of the de facto states. The second model relied on Florea's (2014) *De Facto States in International Politics (1945-2011) Dataset* and included variables that captured group cleavages, rebel capability, and transnational relations. The final model combined the first two models. More detailed notes for these variables and models can be found in the SI file Section 5 in Appendix A.

¹² The three models were estimated using *brms* (Bürkner 2018). The model was estimated with 2 MCMC chains using 1000 iterations as burn-in and retaining 5000 iterations for inference.

Table 3: Latent External Legitimacy and Violence Multilevel Models

	Model 1	Model 2	Full Model
External Legitimacy	-2.39 (-3.64,-1.19)	-2.71 (-3.90,-1.63)	-2.14 (-3.46,-0.82)
Group Concessions	-0.57 (-1.98,0.87)	—	-0.65 (-2.10,0.83)
Group Size	0.13 (-1.77,2.04)	—	0.05 (1.88,2.04)
Accommodations: Reform	0.19 (-1.64,2.10)	—	0.37 (-1.49,2.20)
Accommodations: Autonomy	0.05 (-1.38,1.53)	—	0.03 (-1.46,1.52)
Accommodations: Independence	-0.48 (-1.20,2.24)	—	0.57 (-1.08,2.25)
Restrictions	-0.90 (-0.22,2.04)	—	0.79 (-0.39,1.98)
Concessions	0.53 (-0.86,1.97)	—	0.60 (-0.79,2.01)
Europe	0.54 (-1.37,2.42)	—	0.46 (-1.43,2.39)
Middle East & North Africa	-0.33 (-2.10,1.50)	—	-0.35 (-2.13,1.50)
Oceania	-0.11 (-1.92,1.69)	—	-0.22 (-2.04,1.63)
Southeast Asia	1.21 (-0.70,3.14)	—	1.24 (-0.73,3.20)
Africa	-0.40 (-1.97,1.24)	—	-0.52 (-2.25,1.27)
Hydrocarbon	-0.15 (-1.15,0.82)	—	-0.37 (-1.90,1.20)
Power Status: Powerless	-1.17 (-2.46,0.07)	—	-1.51 (-2.83,-0.19)
Power Status: Discriminated	4.03 (2.58,5.53)	—	3.32 (1.80,4.84)
Diaspora	—	0.82 (-0.87,2.49)	0.04 (-1.64,1.72)
Kin	—	0.37 (-1.21,1.95)	0.17 (-1.51,1.81)
Relative Rebel Capability: Parity	—	0.58 (-0.62,1.79)	-0.28 (-1.89,1.34)
Relative Rebel Capability: Stronger	—	0.33 (-1.19,1.85)	0.17 (-1.52,1.91)
Relative Rebel Capability: Much Stronger	—	-0.90 (-2.21,0.41)	0.05 (-1.85,1.93)
Fragmentation: Hegemonic	—	-0.15 (-1.69,1.39)	0.26 (-1.48,1.95)
Fragmentation: Narrow Rivalry	—	0.39 (-1.12,1.90)	0.59 (-0.98,2.15)
Fragmentation: Narrow Hegemonic Coalition	—	-0.66 (-2.10,0.81)	-0.20 (-1.81,1.43)
Fragmentation: Narrow Coalition of Equals	—	0.04 (-1.58,1.64)	-1.37 (-3.12,0.40)
Fragmentation: Broad Hegemonic Coalition	—	0.13 (-1.10,1.34)	0.09 (-1.42,1.59)
Fragmentation: Broad Coalition of Equals	—	-1.77 (-3.22,-0.34)	-1.46 (-3.05,0.13)
Fragmentation: Fragmented Hegemonic	—	1.44 (0.01,2.85)	0.87 (-0.63,2.40)
Fragmentation: Extremely Fragmented	—	1.30 (0.09,2.54)	1.18 (-0.20,2.65)
Religious Differences	—	-0.66 (-2.04,0.62)	-0.08 (-2.32,1.56)
Ethnic Differences	—	-0.12 (-1.93,1.71)	-0.40 (-2.32,1.52)
Military Personnel	—	-0.02 (-0.05,-0.00)	0.01 (-0.05,0.08)
Power Balance	—	-0.90 (-2.03,-0.11)	0.47 (-1.01,1.99)
Cold War	—	1.38 (0.47,2.31)	.70 (-0.18,1.59)
Strategic Location	—	0.31 (-1.30,1.91)	-0.10 (-1.79,1.58)
Time Since Last Violence	-3.04 (-3.97,-2.16)	-5.36 (-6.21,-4.56)	-2.97 (-3.94,-2.08)
Time Since Last Violence (Quadratic Polynomial)	1.15 (0.57,1.84)	2.35 (1.74,3.03)	1.12 (0.52,1.80)
Time Since Last Violence (Cubic Polynomial)	-0.13 (-0.26,-0.04)	-0.26 (-0.39,-0.15)	-0.13 (-0.25,-0.04)
Country Level Standard Deviation	2.40 (1.01,4.68)	2.82 (1.75,4.27)	2.27 (0.28,4.86)
Year Level Standard Deviation	0.33 (0.02,0.84)	1.27 (0.89,1.75)	0.35 (0.02,0.88)
Num. Obs	1278	2197	1265

The estimates represent the posterior means from the three Bayesian TSCS multilevel models. The associated 95% credible interval is presented in brackets.

Table 3 shows the results of the three latent external legitimacy and violence multilevel models. Across the three models, external legitimacy significantly predicts violence in a given year. The biggest effect is in the second model, which includes variables from the *De Facto States in International Politics (1945-2011) Dataset*, the next is the first model using variables from the

SDM dataset, and the smallest effect is the full combined model. In the first, second, and combined models, it was found that de facto states with the highest levels of external legitimacy have a lower probability of violence, with a reduction of 0.9, 0.8, and 0.7, respectively, when compared to states with the lowest levels of external legitimacy. These three models support my expectations for the relationship between external legitimacy and violence. External legitimacy has a negative effect on violence, and those de facto states which have a lower level of external legitimacy are more likely to resort to violence. This work has demonstrated that external legitimacy consistently predicts violence in de facto states, irrespective of the data coverage or specific set of covariates utilized. As a result, this underscores the broader usefulness of the measure and dataset.

2.5 Conclusion

To what extent do de facto states have a role to play in the international system? By introducing the *External Legitimacy Dataset* and measure of external legitimacy, this study challenges traditional approaches to understanding de facto state relations and offers important insights into the dynamics of peace and conflict in unrecognized states. The findings suggest that external legitimacy plays a crucial role in shaping the behaviour of de facto states, with those that have established conventional avenues of interaction being more likely to be accepted by the international community. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of examining informal practices when considering the external legitimacy of de facto states, which challenges the traditional focus on formal recognition.

Importantly, this research has practical implications for peacebuilding efforts in ongoing secessionist conflicts. The study sheds light on the mechanisms that might lead to de facto states with lower levels of external legitimacy being more likely to engage in violent conflict, which

could offer new insights into conflict dynamics and peacebuilding in unrecognized states. Those with lower levels of external legitimacy are more inclined to engage in violent activity, highlighting the need for greater attention to be paid to the role of external legitimacy in peace and conflict resolution efforts. Moreover, the study highlights the potential significance of international integration and reputation considerations in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts in de facto states, emphasizing the need for additional research in this area.

This more accurate depiction of de facto state relations suggests both a challenge to and a reinforcement of the values of the contemporary international system. The persistence of de facto states challenges the principle of sovereignty, yet they also conform to international practices by engaging externally as other states do; those with the highest degree of external legitimacy participate in conventional avenues of interaction. This work has demonstrated how de facto states rely on both formal and informal relations with recognized states to forge meaningful networks of allies who implicitly and unintentionally support their continued existence. Rather than threatening the international order, some of these states engaged in ‘frozen conflicts’ are too preoccupied with fitting in. This research invites further investigation into the complexities of statehood, the international interactions of states, and violence, positioning de facto states at the forefront of studies on peace and conflict. The new dataset and measure of external legitimacy presented in this study will undoubtedly assist scholars in this endeavour.

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3 Who Counts as a State? Perceptions of De Facto State

International Status

3.1 Abstract

De facto states exhibit a wide range of behaviors in the international system, with some excluded while others participate as states in everything but name. Existing scholarship has been unable to provide a sufficient explanation for the variation in their rate of participation. Relying on a continuous understanding of external legitimacy, this article offers a comprehensive and nuanced approach to understanding the complex dynamics of de facto state international status. This study uses a multimethod design, including an elite survey of diplomats and academics (N=133), to identify the key factors determining external legitimacy for de facto states. The survey includes a conjoint experiment, testing the impact of regime type, international organization membership, recognition by a United Nations member state, Great Power support, territorial claims, and the presence of separatist movements on perceptions of external legitimacy. Non-metric preference scaling analysis is also used to identify the attributes that increase external legitimacy, revealing small subgroup differences based on respondents' region and profession. Finally, using the conjoint experiment results, the study predicts external legitimacy for nine contemporary de facto states and finds that experts perceive more variation in de facto state external legitimacy than is typically reflected in the literature. By identifying the key factors contributing to variation in external legitimacy among de facto states, this study helps advance our understanding of their role and status in the international system.

3.2 Introduction

The contemporary process of state recognition in the international system is complex, marked by political contestation and conceptual ambiguity (Ostred 1997). Historically, state recognition was largely based on a state's internal capacity, with admission into the international system determined on meritocratic grounds. This meant that a state's sovereignty was closely tied to its internal capacity, resulting in a correspondence between the two. However, since 1945, the criteria for statehood and international recognition have shifted towards normative and political considerations, creating a system largely independent of a state's internal capacity (Jackson 1987). This has left de facto states navigating a complicated path toward recognition and legitimacy (Bakke et al. 2014). In this context, de facto states work tirelessly to petition the international community for recognition to ensure their survival and increase their external legitimacy. The level of external legitimacy signifies their degree of acceptance and participation in the international system. However, the shifting criteria for statehood and recognition have also made United Nations (UN) member states the gatekeepers of statehood, limiting access to the community (Osterud 1997; Fabry 2010; Newman and Visoka 2018). This has resulted in a fluid and often erratic system of recognition, with conflicting and inconsistent membership criteria.

Scholars have identified several factors that can help a de facto state achieve recognition including the role of norms such as self-determination, the concept of a "remedial right" to recognition, Great Power support and the idea of "earned" recognition (Buchanan 1997; Coggins 2011, 2014; Bereketeab 2015; Caspersen 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015; Ryngaert & Sobrie, 2011;

Laoutides 2016).¹³ Despite the excellent contributions on this topic, there remains a gap in our understanding of the variation in de facto states' international status. While gaining formal recognition presents a significant challenge, there are opportunities for these states to increase their status and participation in the international arena prior to achieving statehood. Diplomatic engagement, and relationship-building with other nations and international organizations can boost a de facto state's visibility and legitimacy in the international community, granting them similar benefits to formal states without contravening the principles of the international order (Ker-Lindsay 2015). Rather than fixating on formal recognition, it is essential to shift our focus towards examining how de facto states can enhance their position and legitimacy in the international system. By adopting this approach, we can gain a deeper understanding of how these states navigate the informal channels within an international system that does not formally recognize their existence.

In this article, I offer a comprehensive and nuanced approach to understanding the dynamics of de facto state international status, taking into account how various attributes might interact with and shape the process. As such, this project is centered around two questions: (i) What attributes are considered important by experts for affecting international status? (ii) To what extent do these factors translate into differences in the international status of de facto states? This article uses a multimethod design to address these questions. After reviewing the literature on recognition and examining international practices since 1945, I identify the most crucial factors that impact a de

¹³ A 'remedial right' to recognition refers to the concept that a particular group or community may have a justifiable right to secede or separate from an existing political entity as a means of addressing severe grievances or injustices. For a more detailed account on this see Buchanan 1997. 'Earned' recognition will be explored in greater detail in Section 3.3 below.

facto state's international status. Using this information, I conduct an elite survey of diplomats and academics (N=133) to analyze the attributes that contribute to a de facto state's external legitimacy.

To test the impact of various factors on perceptions of external legitimacy, I embed a conjoint experiment within the survey. The conjoint design is suitable for the complexity of external legitimacy, taking into account the numerous considerations that affect the acceptance of de facto states. The survey confirms that regime type, IO membership, recognition by a UN member state, Great Power support, territorial claims, and separatist movements in a region significantly affect external legitimacy. Additionally, a non-metric preference scaling analysis on rank-ordered data reveals subgroup differences based on respondents' region and profession. To identify states with more or less perceived legitimacy, I then predict external legitimacy from the results of the conjoint experiment for nine contemporary de facto states. By using data on actual de facto states, this study eliminates the potential cognitive and ideological bias of direct questioning and enables us to comprehend how academics and diplomats perceive the external legitimacy of de facto states.

The findings of this article are significant for several reasons. The results demonstrate the key factors that affect academic and diplomat perceptions of de facto state international status, providing a ranking of factors in terms of what experts believe to be important for external legitimacy. In so doing, it offers policy recommendations for de facto states on the strategic decisions they may want to adopt in their pursuit of greater international legitimacy. This study also confirms the multidimensional nature of these decisions, highlighting that a combination of all six attributes is most favourable in increasing external legitimacy rather than finding that one attribute alone leads to increased legitimacy. Moreover, by examining subgroup differences, the

findings suggest that there are slight nuances in the understanding of external legitimacy, with diplomats preferring the idea of a “collective recognition” more so than academics. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of distinguishing between de facto state external relations rather than grouping them together based on their international non-status. In so doing, it better captures the characteristics of de facto state external relations. This article offers crucial insights for policymakers and IR scholars alike, shedding light on the complex international status of de facto states and identifying the key factors that influence external legitimacy.

3.3 What Matters for De Facto State International Status?

In recent scholarship, there has been an increasing focus on the international interactions of de facto states, with several scholars noting their engagement in trade, participation in treaties, and lobbying efforts to join international and regional organizations (Florea 2014; Florea 2017; Ker-Lindsay 2015; Toomla 2016; Caspersen 2019; Huddleston 2020). This has prompted scholars to explore the factors that contribute to UN member state engagement with de facto states (Ker-Lindsay 2015; Berg and Pegg 2018; Caspersen 2019). For instance, Berg and Toomla (2009) categorized external relations between de facto states and the international community into negation, boycott, toleration, and quasi-recognition, providing insight into the factors that enable or hinder de facto-state normalization. Huddleston (2020) also considers how UN member states' perceptions of a de facto state's parent state may impact its recognition levels. Recent research has shown that de facto states' external relations exist on a spectrum of international legitimacy, with varying levels of formal non-recognition. This state of "international limbo" requires deeper comprehension (Caspersen and Stansfield 2011).

De facto state external legitimacy can provide an alternative measure of international status, offering insight into their level of acceptance and integration into international society.

However, understanding what factors move de facto states along this spectrum is still insufficiently researched. While there are examples of how de facto states might achieve recognition, the factors impacting their legitimacy have been comparatively understudied. As recognition and legitimacy are closely related aspects of a state's international status, it is likely that the factors that influence recognition also impact its external legitimacy. Scholarship on what impacts recognition can offer a framework for understanding the primary drivers of state recognition since 1945 and potential avenues for enhancing the external legitimacy of de facto states.

According to those who subscribe to the constitutive school of thought, social acceptance from other legitimate states is crucial for a state's legitimacy and entry into the international system. This idea is rooted in the legal principle of *consensual jus gentium*, which maintains that a state can only be recognized as such with the agreement and consent of other states (Ryngaert and Sobrie 2011, p.469). In this view, recognition is not an outcome but a determinant of statehood, as states are mutually constituted. This social acceptance is primarily achieved through bilateral and multilateral interactions. The most significant act of recognition is bilateral recognition by a UN member state or participation in a major international organization like the World Bank. Official recognition from a UN member state is considered a critical factor for de facto state recognition, as individual states, "in the absence of an international regulatory mechanism for recognizing aspiring states," decide who is a member and who is not (Visoka and Newman 2020). In addition, membership in an international or regional organization enables de facto states to interact with other recognized states and provides opportunities for de facto states to gain allies and petition for recognition, thereby increasing their chances of receiving greater recognition. This "collective recognition" by a group of states which de facto states acquire upon joining

international and regional organizations reinforces their external legitimacy within the international system (Snow and Cull 2020).

De facto states' 'rights' to achieve international recognition are also an important idea in international practices.¹⁴ Over time, a complex system of rights has emerged, underpinned by normative structures that guide the recognition process. As such, the recognition regime at any given time reflects the evolution of international norms (Griffiths and Fazal 2014). While there are several norms that inform the recognition process, two 'rights' have emerged as dominant in international practices.¹⁵ These are the principles of territorial integrity and 'earned' recognition.

While perhaps counter-intuitive, territorial integrity can be a valid justification for recognizing de facto states. The liberal international system stresses the importance of respecting territorial integrity (Zacher 2001). If a de facto state can make a legitimate claim to their land and market itself appropriately, it has the potential to increase its claims for recognition. This may include having had a prior statehood before being forcefully integrated into a larger entity or state; having had a distinct colonial history from the state they were absorbed into after independence; willfully joining in a union after having been their own independent entity; and having been expelled from a territory (Griffiths and Martinez, 2021). These conditions work together to provide a more convincing case of the de facto states 'right' to the territory and their ability to leave their parent state due to the grievances they faced. The recognition of East Timor's

¹⁴ While often not a formal codified legal right, these 'rights' are considered well-established claims to rights, often viewed as legitimate claims if properly backed up by empirical evidence.

¹⁵ Another norm that informs the recognition process is the approval of the parent state. However, this is something that has predominantly been tied to the official recognition process. In recent history, if a de facto state gets the approval of their parent state, recognition follows. As this article is looking at what moves de facto states along the external legitimacy spectrum, this norm is seen as less relevant.

independence after Indonesia's invasion in 1975 exemplifies this principle as it was then perceived by most recognized states and the UN as an "occupation. " This was given East Timor's former existence as a distinct Portuguese administered political entity (Taylor 1990; Moxham 2008; Hodge 2013). While not all de facto states have a colonial history or are a product of state dissolution, using territorial claims to reconfigure post-colonial borders has a precedent, particularly in Africa.¹⁶ The principle of *uti possidetis*, which entails that a new state should retain the colonial borders it had before independence, was reinforced by the Badinter Commission. This principle guided the creation of new countries like Croatia and Serbia while discouraging other secessionist movements in the former Yugoslavia (Laoutides 2016).

Another important 'right' to statehood de facto states rely on is the idea of 'earned' sovereignty (Berg 2009; Caspersen 2015). De facto states increasingly rely on the concept of 'earned' sovereignty, which corresponds with the recommendation for Kosovo's independence and the "standards before status" policy. By aligning with democratic values, de facto states can legitimize themselves and avoid being seen as a security threat. This strategy has become central to their bid for statehood, as they argue that they have proven themselves to be acceptable states. Leaders of de facto states have often cited their democratic transitions as justification for recognition.¹⁷ While the impact of democratization on recognition is not well-established in scholarship, scholars have noted how this framing represents an important strategy for de facto

¹⁶ Several states, such as the United Arab Republic, the Mali Federation, and the Senegambia Federation, dissolved and created their own countries guided by the legal concept of *uti possidetis* (Laoutides 2016).

¹⁷ For instance, in a written address to UK leaders, former President Silanyo of Somaliland substantiated their statehood claims by outlining how they have "established a viable democratic state in which power transfers peacefully from one party to another in internationally monitored elections" (Silanyo 2018).

states in their statehood bid (Caspersen 2010). As such, further exploration of this topic is warranted.

The literature on international recognition also emphasizes the role of geopolitical factors in a state's attainment of formal recognition. As Newman and Visoka (2018) suggest, the recognition of states is closely linked to "the whims and interests of great powers." Geopolitical factors take various forms, such as access to material resources, the establishment of military bases in strategic locations, patron-client relationships, and ethnic or cultural ties. However, the support of Great Powers and the domino effect are two critical factors for the attainment of recognition.

While, in theory, all members of the international community of states are conceived as equal sovereign states, some states have more power than others in this club. Given their vast share of wealth and global influence, Great Power support can often catalyze an increase in a prospective state's external legitimacy. Coggins (2011, 2014), Borgen (2009), and Stereo (2015) argue that Great Powers can provide military support, funding, and push for the recognition of *de facto* states on the international stage.¹⁸ However, the impact of such support is not always straightforward. Great Powers may have divergent interests when it comes to recognizing new states (Siroky et al. 2021), resulting in a stalemate where the *de facto* state remains unrecognized despite the Great Power's support. Nonetheless, empirical evidence suggests that once one Great Power recognizes a state, other states tend to follow suit (Coggins 2014).¹⁹

¹⁸ For instance, the US backed South Sudan's independence from Sudan by providing the Sudan People's Liberation Movement with funding and coordinating their recognition in international forums (Dagne 2011).

¹⁹ These recognizers tend to be the states that align themselves with the Great Powers. For example, if the United States recognizes a state, it is highly likely that other states associated with the Western bloc would also recognize it. Understanding this geopolitical dynamic is a crucial area that warrants further attention and exploration.

The existence of another separatist group in the de facto state's region is another major geopolitical consideration. The recognizing of de facto states can result in a perceived domino effect where successful separatist movements are thought to inspire others within the same region to secede (Conversi 1993; Forsberg 2013; Biermann 2014; Relitz 2019). This has been empirically observed, with governments less likely to accommodate secessionist requests when other separatist groups are present (Walters 2006). Additionally, self-determination claims can spread to neighboring countries, making them "contagious" (Cunningham and Sawyer, 2017). Therefore, the presence or absence of separatist movements in the region is considered a crucial factor in deciding the international status of de facto states.

Based on a comprehensive review, this study aims to analyze the determinants of external legitimacy for de facto states. Six key attributes are identified as potentially significant factors: membership in IOs, support from one or more Great Powers, regime type, territorial claims, and the presence of a separatist movement in the region. These attributes form the basis for hypotheses 1-6, as presented in **Table 4**. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that the perceived importance of each factor may vary depending on the respondent's background and regional perspective. The impact of regime type, for instance, may vary based on the respondent's geographic location. Individuals from Western countries might place greater value on de facto states being democratic compared to those in non-Western states. Additionally, regional trends may emerge in the evaluation of membership of de facto states in international organizations. Respondents from regions more align with the liberal international system, such as the West, may attribute greater significance to factors like membership in international organizations and recognition by UN member states. Moreover, differences in the assessment of what matters for external legitimacy may arise between academics and diplomats due to their areas of focus. Academic discussions on statehood often emphasize the

realpolitik interests that guide this process. Consequently, academics are likely to attach greater importance to factors such as support from Great Powers. These speculations are captured in hypotheses 7-9.

Furthermore, the design of the survey may influence the relative importance of attributes. The study employs both a rank-order component, where respondents directly rank attributes individually, and a conjoint experiment, where respondents evaluate country profiles in a multidimensional decision-making setting. The subsequent section will provide a detailed explanation of this survey design.

Table 4: Hypotheses

Number	Hypothesis
1	De facto states that have received recognition from a UN member are likely to be perceived as having higher external legitimacy compared to those without recognition.
2	De facto states that are members of international organizations are likely to be perceived as having higher external legitimacy compared to those without membership.
3	De facto states with legitimate territorial claims are likely to be perceived as having higher external legitimacy compared to those without such claims.
4	De facto states that receive support from a Great Power are likely to be perceived as having higher external legitimacy compared to those without support.
5	De facto states that are democratic are likely to be perceived as having higher external legitimacy compared to those that are not.
6	De facto states that do not have a separatist group in their region are likely to be perceived as having higher external legitimacy compared to those that do.
7	Respondents from the West (North America, Europe) are more likely to attribute higher value to democracy in assessing the external legitimacy of de facto states.
8	Respondents from the West (North America, Europe) are more likely to attribute higher value to membership in international organizations and recognition by UN member states in assessing the external legitimacy of de facto states.
9	Academics are more likely to attribute higher value to support from Great Powers in assessing the external legitimacy of de facto states.

3.4 Research Design

This article uses an elite survey to examine the impact of various attributes on the external legitimacy of de facto states. **Table 5** displays the six attributes identified in the literature review.²⁰ The study utilizes both a conjoint experiment and a rank-order component to evaluate the relative importance of these attributes. The survey was conducted in February and March 2022, with a sample size of 133 English-speaking adults, including 42 diplomats and 91 academics. Diplomats were selected based on Moyer and Markle's (2018) *Relative National Power Dataset* to identify the most powerful countries in each region of the world.²¹ Academics were identified based on their past publications on relevant topics in the last twenty years, using a search of JSTOR's Political Science, Comparative Politics, International Law, and International Relations journals. The survey was sent via email to roughly 860 selected experts with a 15 percent response rate.²²

To analyze subgroup differences in the sample, the survey began by collecting demographic information related to the respondents' job titles and regions of the world they belong to. After collecting demographic information, the respondents were provided with a blurb that explained what de facto states were. Notably, the importance of non-UN membership was emphasized alongside other key characteristics of de facto states. The wording of this section is available in SI File Section 1.1 in Appendix B. It is important to note that the survey did not define external legitimacy, as the purpose of the conjoint element of the survey was to assess which

²⁰ While it is likely that de facto states could have multiple IO memberships, UN member state recognition, support from a Great Power(s), presence of multiple separatist movements, I specifically defined them as binary so that we might evaluate the effect of a one-unit increase on external legitimacy.

²¹ To avoid skewed results, diplomats who were from the parent states of de facto states were excluded.

²² For this project, I received ethics approval from Westerns research ethics board. The project ID is 120005.

factors the respondents perceived as important for external legitimacy without influence from any particular definition.

Table 5: Attribute Levels

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Attribute Levels</i>
Recognition by a UN Member State	Recognized by a UN member state, Not recognized by a UN member state
Territorial Claim	Reclaiming former territory, Not reclaiming former territory
Presence of Separatist Movements in Region	No other separatist movements are in the same region as the de facto state, Other separatist movements are in the same region as the de facto state
Great Power Relationship	Has support from a Great Power, Does not have support from a Great power
Regime Type	Democracy, Non-democracy
International Organization Membership	Is a member of an international organization, Is not a member of an international organization

This study employs a fully randomized conjoint experiment to explore the multidimensional decision-making processes involved in identifying de facto states with varying levels of external legitimacy. Before the conjoint experiment, respondents were given a brief introduction that explained the 15-choice tasks.²³ Pairwise profiles of hypothetical de facto states labelled as Country A and Country B were then presented to the respondents, who were asked to evaluate and choose between each profile. Building on the work of Bechtel, Hainmueller, and Margalit (2017), the conjoint survey also included a ranking component. Respondents were asked to rate each country profile on a scale of 1-7, with one representing no external legitimacy and

²³ Fifteen choice tasks were selected based on the simulated power calculations done prior to fielding the survey. Based on this simulation, 15 tasks provided sufficient power to detect minimum effect sizes with at least 80% power. Please see the SI File Section 1.2 in Appendix B for more information.

seven representing the maximum amount of external legitimacy. Each respondent assessed 30 country profiles, with each set of comparisons displayed on a new screen. An example of the pairwise profiles is included in SI File Section 1.2 in Appendix B. For each attribute in each country profile, a random attribute value is drawn. To evaluate expert perceptions of external legitimacy and potential subgroup differences, this study uses the approach of Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley (2020) to estimate Marginal Means.²⁴ The study uses the *cregg* R package to estimate the marginal means (Leeper 2020).

The second component of the survey aimed to directly understand the factors that increase external legitimacy of de facto states for experts. The survey included a question that asked respondents to rank the six attributes in order of importance, with one being the most important and six being the least important. The question wording is available in the SI File Section 1.2 in Appendix B. To analyze the results, a non-metric preference scaling analysis was carried out. This technique is used to measure the relative preferences of individuals for different options without assigning numerical values to those preferences (Jacoby 2014). By doing so, it allows for a deeper understanding of the complex preferences of subgroups, as the analysis can identify whether diplomats and academics from different regions of the world have differing perceptions of what increases external legitimacy and helps to identify the geometric structure of the data. To conduct the analysis, the *optiscale* package was used (Jacoby 2021). This approach provides a more

²⁴ In this study, this approach is chosen rather than the Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE) as it provides a better depiction of the descriptive quantities about the levels of favourability of the respondents' preferences. Marginal means demonstrate the absolute level of favourability of respondents relating to all levels of each country's profile (Bechtel et al. 2017). Further, it does not include an arbitrary reference category; therefore, differences between subgroups are not sensitive to the omitted category.

illustrative analysis of the survey results and allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the preferences of different groups.

The final component of the survey aims to understand how constellations of different factors may align to produce states with more or less perceived legitimacy. To collect data for the predicted legitimacy, six binary indicators were used, including UN member state recognition, presence of a territorial claim, regime type, separatist movement in the de facto state region, Great Power support, and IO membership. While two of the variables were self-collected, the remaining four relied on existing datasets updated to 2020. A detailed description of the indicators and their sources can be found in SI File Section 2 in Appendix B. Using the six indicators and the marginal means of the forced choice question in the conjoint survey, predicted legitimacy scores were generated for nine contemporary de facto states from 2005-2020. The selected states include Kosovo, Taiwan, Abkhazia, Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR), Somaliland, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, South Ossetia, Artsakh, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). These states were selected based on their geographical range, variation in their domestic conditions and international engagement, and full data coverage across the six indicators.²⁵ By using observed data for the actual states, I take the insights of this model from the abstract to the observed. This approach attempts to provide a more objective and accurate reflection of the perceived legitimacy of contemporary de facto states in the eyes of experts.

²⁵ These de facto states come from five regions of the world and have varying domestic conditions and approaches to international engagement. The de facto states have variation in the factors discussed above. For instance, Kosovo has several bilateral recognitions while Somaliland has none. Somaliland has a territorial claim to statehood while South Ossetia does not. Some such as Artsakh and the TRNC engage in a patron-client relationship for their international engagement while others like Taiwan pursue international engagement through bilateral relations and multilateral engagements.

3.5 Results

3.5.1 Conjoint Experiment

Figure 6 displays the marginal means for each attribute level based on the forced choice dependent variable. **Figure 7** displays the marginal means for each attribute level based on the external legitimacy scale dependent variable. The marginal means for each attribute level based on both the forced choice and scale indicate that all six attributes have statistically significant effects. In order of effect size, I find that IO membership, UN state recognition and Great Power support, democratic regime type, lack of other separatist movements existing in the region, and reclaiming former territory each has a statistically significant effect on the level of favourability respondents had toward the country profiles.²⁶

The attribute with the largest significant difference in percentage points is IO membership. 63% of the time, a profile for IO members was chosen as more legitimate, compared to 37% of the time for non-IO members. Profiles that included IO membership, on average, scored 3.43 on the legitimacy scale, and non-IO membership scored 2.55.

Recognition by UN member states is also important. There was a statistically significant 22 percentage point difference owing to recognition. Roughly 61% of the time, profiles with UN recognition deemed more legitimate than those without recognition. The converse happened only 39% of the time. In addition, profiles that included recognition by UN member states, on average, have a legitimacy score of 3.37 compared to 2.59 for lack of UN member state recognition.

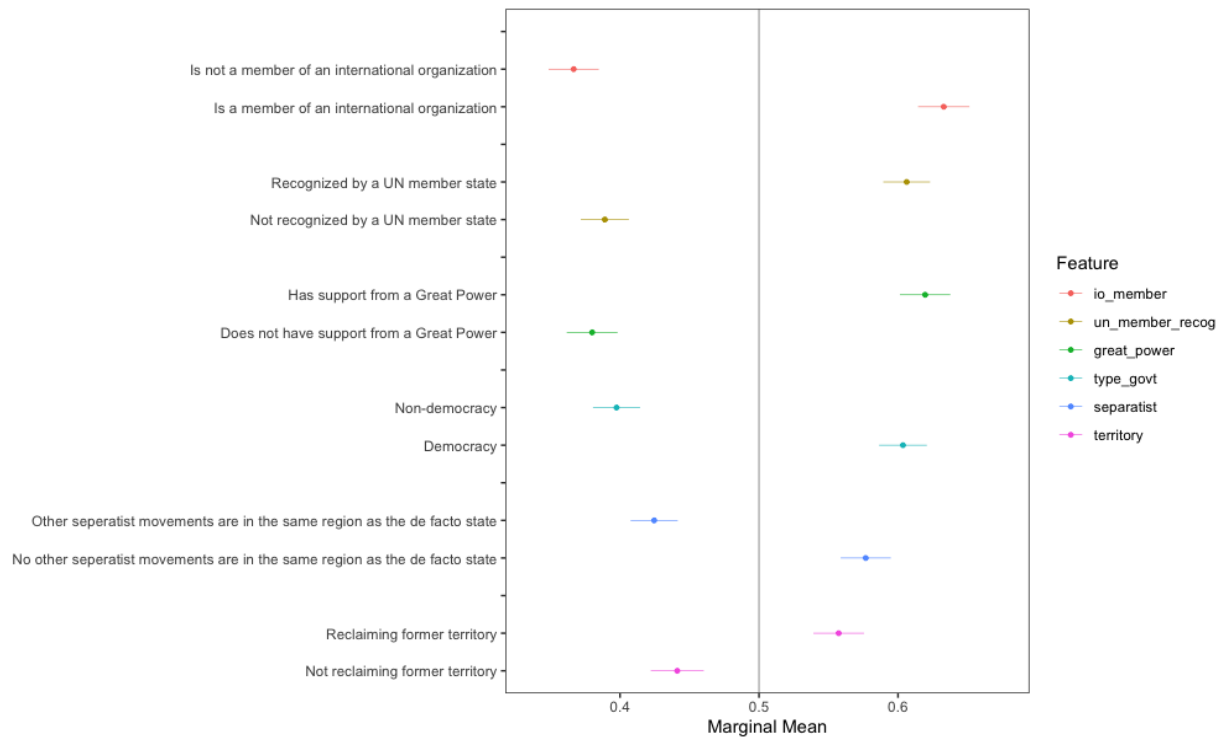
²⁶ Based on these results UN member recognition and Great Power Support have the same effect on external legitimacy. While Great Power support has a higher percentage point differences between levels from the forced choice by 2, UN member recognition has a larger difference of the levels on the scale by 2.

Support from a Great Power had a statistically significant effect on the level of favourability of the survey respondents. In 62% of the cases, the profile with Great Power support was chosen as more legitimate compared to 38% for those that did not enjoy support from a Great Power. In addition, profiles that included Great power support, on average, have a legitimacy score of 3.37 compared to 2.61 for lack of support.

In a comparison of regime types, there is a statistically significant 20-percentage point difference between non-democracy and democracy.²⁷ For regime type, 60% of the time, the hypothetical country with higher levels of democracy was thought to have more external legitimacy. In 40% of the cases, the state with the less democratic regime was chosen. In addition, profiles that included the level of democracy have an average legitimacy score of 3.34 compared to 2.64 for non-democratic profiles.

Expectations related to the separatist movement in the region are also confirmed, as respondents prefer no separatist movements over separatist movements in the region. There is a statistically significant difference of 16%. I found that 58% of the time, the profile with no (other) separatist movements was thought to have greater external legitimacy. This only happened 42% of the time for profiles where other separatist movements were present. Moreover, on the legitimacy scale, profiles that had “no separatist movements in the region” have an average legitimacy score of 3.22, whereas profiles with “separatist movements in the region” have a score of 2.76.

²⁷ It is important to note that in this study, the term "democracy" refers specifically to "liberal democracy" rather than the more limited concept of "electoral democracy" based on Freedom House data. For further elaboration, please refer to SI File 2 in Appendix B.

Figure 6: Marginal Mean Forced-Choice Results

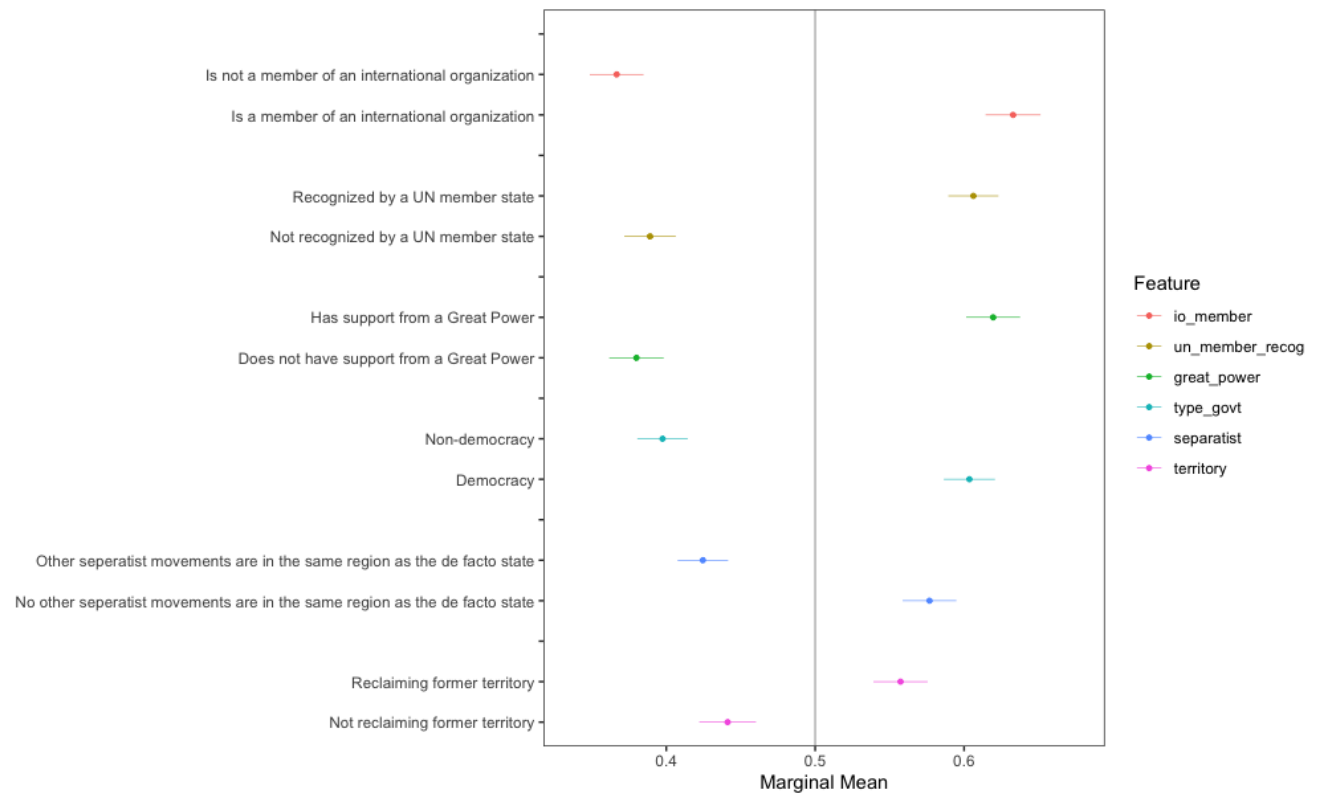
Point estimates represent the marginal means. Lines denote 95% confidence intervals.

Groups reclaiming former territory were also statistically significantly more likely to be deemed legitimate. 56% of the time, profiles with groups reclaiming former territory were chosen as more legitimate, compared to 44% of the time for those groups that were not reclaiming former territory. Furthermore, profiles that included reclaiming former territory have an average legitimacy score of 3.16 compared to 2.81, for those that are not reclaiming former territory.

The analysis found that all six attributes - IO membership, UN state recognition and Great Power support, democratic regime type, lack of other separatist movements, and reclaiming former territory - have statistically significant effects on favourability. IO membership had the largest significant difference followed by UN member recognition and Great Power support which had similar effects.

I also estimated the subgroup differences between academics and diplomats and found no notable differences in the conjoint results. Additionally, I estimated the subgroup differences by respondent region and found no statistically significant differences. These are included in SI File Section 1.3 in Appendix B.

Figure 7: Marginal Mean Scale Results



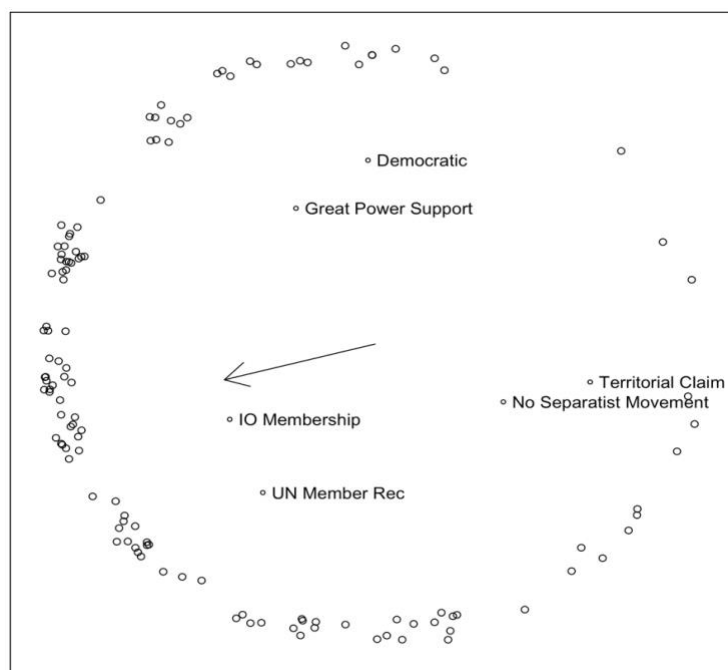
Point estimates represent the marginal means. Lines denote 95% confidence intervals.

3.5.2 Rank-Order Non-Metric Preference Scaling

The non-metric preference scaling model, illustrated in **Figure 8**, utilizes ranked-order data from surveys to understand and compare people's preferences or rankings without assuming a specific

measurement scale.²⁸ This flexible analysis of subjective data is particularly valuable when a clear numerical scale or distances between preferences are uncertain. The arrangement of circular points in **Figure 8** reflects the similarity in importance rankings assigned by expert survey respondents to corresponding attributes. Notably, the majority of points cluster on the left side of the circle, particularly between Great Power Support, IO membership, and UN member recognition. Additionally, **Figure 8** depicts an arrowed line indicating the average rank of respondents' preferences, revealing that IO membership was ranked as the most important attribute, followed by territorial claim, no separatist movement in the region, UN member state recognition, Great Power Support, and democratic regime type.

Figure 8: Non-Metric Preference Scaling Results



The circles represent the terminal points of the individual respondent vectors, the arrowed line represents mean direction vector.

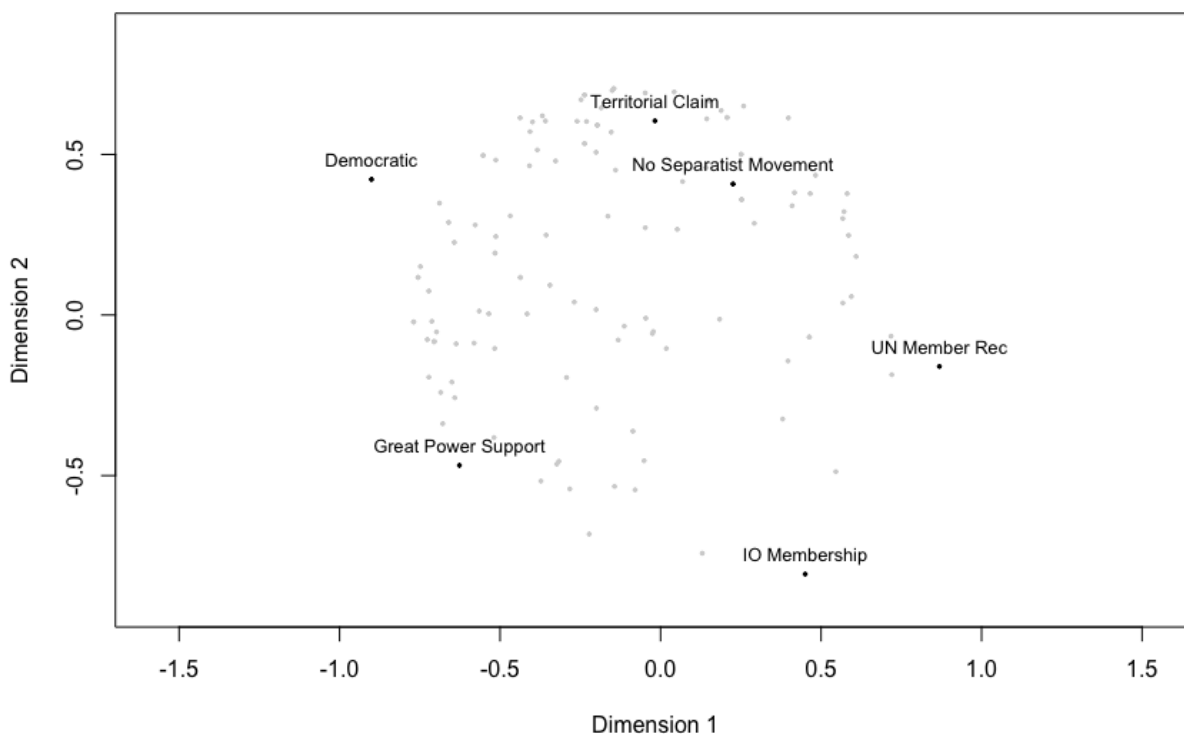
²⁸ The appropriateness of a two-dimensional model for the conjoint rank-order data was first examined. The model was found to be appropriate and accounted for a substantial portion (84%) of the variability in the data.

Figure 8 provides valuable insights by revealing that the six attributes can be categorized into three distinct clusters. The first cluster, situated in the top middle, comprises the attributes of democratic regime type and Great Power support. The second cluster, located in the middle right, includes territorial claim and the absence of a separatist movement in the region. Lastly, the third cluster, found in the lower left, consists of IO membership and UN member state recognition. While **Figure 8** hints at the coexistence of the second and third clusters along one dimension and the first cluster's presence on another, **Figure 9**, the joint configuration plot, offers a more comprehensive depiction of these rankings' organization.

Figure 9 uses a two-dimensional space to represent the positions of the items, aiming to elucidate the underlying structure of individuals' preferences or perceptions regarding the attributes under study. Dimension 2 seems to capture the domestic conditions of the state, with democracy, territorial claim, and the absence of a separatist movement in the region ranking higher on this dimension. Conversely, international factors like UN member recognition, Great Power support, and IO membership show negative associations on this dimension. Dimension 1 appears to reflect the international social acceptance of de facto states. UN member recognition occupies the highest position on this dimension, indicating its status as the most robust indicator of social acceptance, representing unanimous recognition internationally. Following this is IO membership, which signifies collective acceptance by a group of states. The absence of separatists in the region suggests some degree of social acceptance, while territorial claim appears to have no impact on the international social acceptance of de facto states. This discrepancy likely arises from its minimal influence on the global perception of de facto states. In contrast, Great Power support and the democratic regime type receive negative rankings in terms of social acceptance, potentially due to their divisive nature on an international level. For example, the support of a Great Power,

as seen with Russia and the two Donbas region de facto states, can have adverse effects on the social acceptance of de facto states. Similarly, democracy may be viewed as less important by states that do not prioritize it. **Figure 9** effectively demonstrates how experts perceive and likely organize external legitimacy factors by considering a combination of domestic elements and external acceptance.

Figure 9: Joint Configuration Plot



In order to delve deeper into the data, the preferences of different subgroups were analyzed, as depicted in **Figures 10** and **11** showcasing the expert demographics. Substantial disparities emerged among these subgroups, particularly when comparing academics and diplomats. Notably, statistically significant differences were observed between the two groups.²⁹ On average,

²⁹ To evaluate the disparities between academics and diplomats, a bootstrap approach was employed to estimate the confidence interval for the angle that distinguishes them. The analysis yielded an estimated angle of approximately

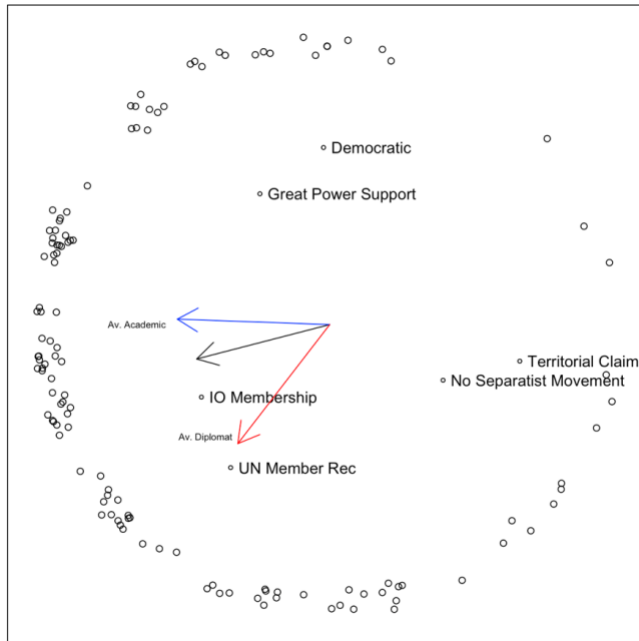
diplomats ranked UN member recognition as their top preference, closely followed by IO membership, democratic regime type, the absence of separatist movements in the region, Great Power support, and territorial claim. In contrast, academics displayed a distinct ranking pattern, placing territorial claim at the forefront of their preferences, succeeded by the absence of separatist movements in the region, IO membership, Great Power support, UN member recognition, and democratic regime type.

In **Figure 11**, the analysis of various regions revealed that most regions displayed preferences that closely aligned with the overall average. However, significant differences were observed among the groups. Latin America exhibited statistically significant differences compared to Europe, Asia, and North America, while Asia had significant differences compared to Africa and North America.³⁰ For a comprehensive examination of the rankings across all subgroup levels, including detailed information on their orderings, please refer to Section 3.1 of the SI file in Appendix B. This section provides an extensive exploration of preferences within each subgroup, offering valuable insights into the nuanced perspectives observed throughout the analysis.

33 degrees, accompanied by a confidence interval spanning from 7.8 to 53.9 degrees. Notably, the exclusion of zero within the confidence interval implies a significant deviation from zero, indicating a substantial distinction between the two groups. Please refer to Section 1.5 and 1.6 in the SI file in Appendix B for more details.

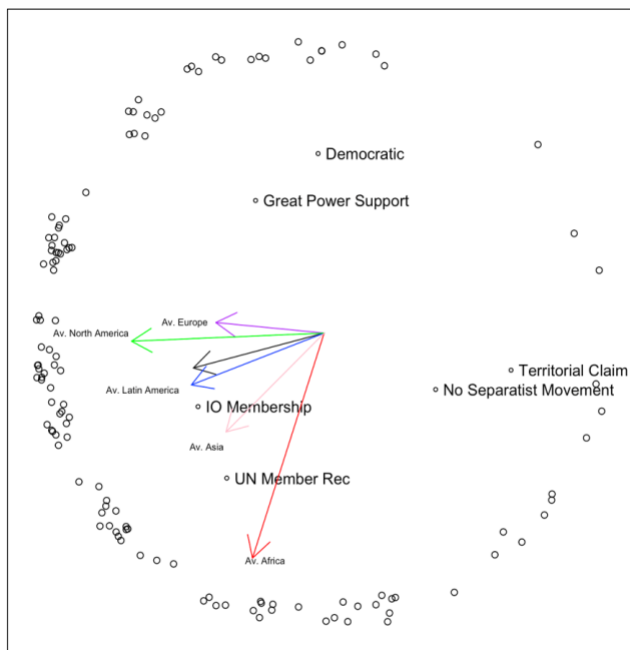
³⁰ To assess the variations among the regions, a bootstrap approach was used to determine the confidence interval associated with the distinctive angle(s). For comprehensive information regarding the estimations and confidence intervals for each pair, please refer to Section 1.5 and 1.6 in the SI file in Appendix B.

Figure 10: Mean Vectors for Academics and Diplomats



The circles represent the terminal points of the individual respondent vectors, the blue arrowed line represents mean direction vector for academics, the red arrowed line represents mean direction vector for diplomats and black arrowed line represents mean direction for all respondents.

Figure 11: Mean Vectors by Respondent Region



The circles represent the terminal points of the individual respondent vectors, the different coloured arrowed lines represents mean direction by region and the black arrowed line represents mean direction for all respondents.

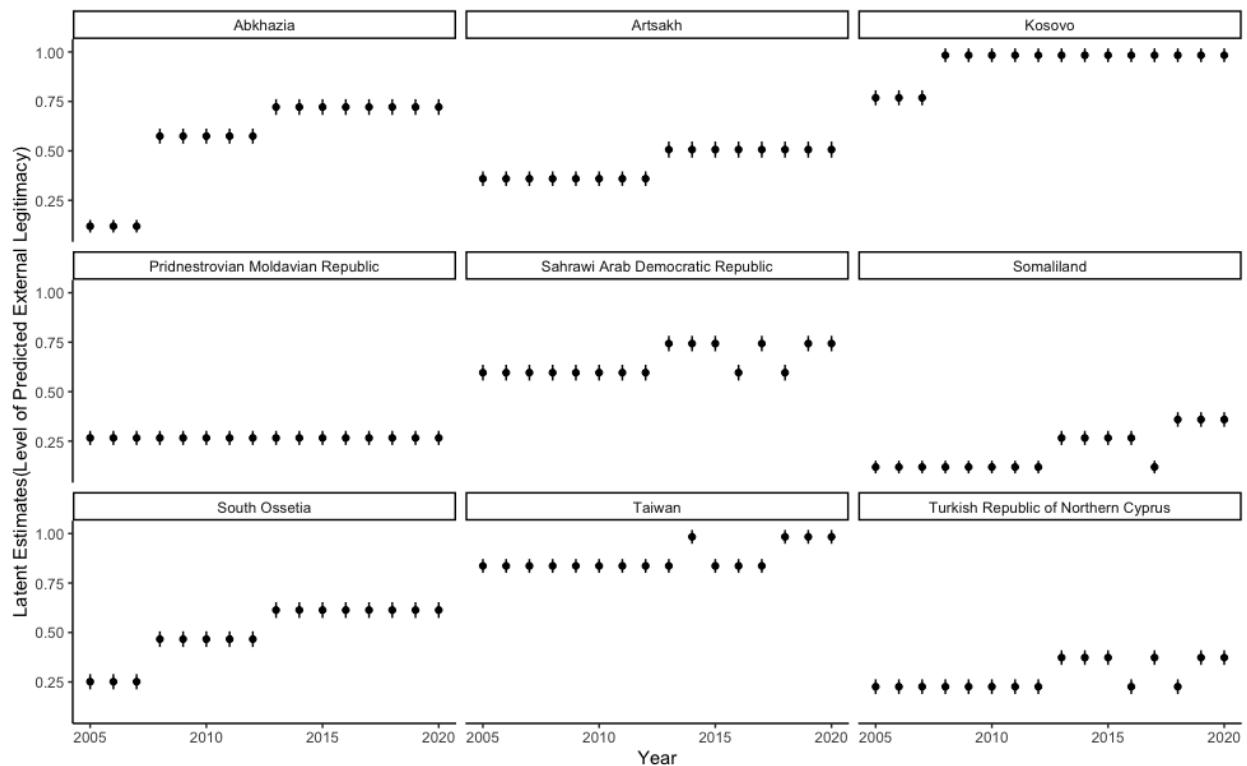
3.5.3 Predicted Legitimacy

Building upon the previous empirical sections, the final section aims to delve deeper into the factors that influence the perceived external legitimacy of states. In order to achieve this, I have used six indicators and the marginal means from the forced choice question in the conjoint survey. By employing this methodology, I have generated predicted legitimacy scores for nine contemporary de facto states, spanning the period from 2005 to 2020. These selected states have been chosen to represent a diverse range of geographical locations and domestic situations. Additionally, they provide comprehensive data coverage across the six indicators that I am examining. By analyzing observed data for actual states, the approach aims to provide an objective and accurate reflection of the perceived legitimacy of contemporary de facto states, as determined by experts in the field. Through this comprehensive analysis, a deeper understanding can be reached of how different factors combine to shape the perceived legitimacy of states.

Figure 12 displays the predicted level of external legitimacy for nine de facto states over a period of fifteen years. Notably, except for the PMR, the level of legitimacy varies for the de facto states over time. Abkhazia, for instance, experiences a steady increase in external legitimacy, with three bloc increases since 2005. In 2008, it observed a significant surge, followed by a slight upward trend in 2013. Conversely, Artsakh maintained relatively stable in its level of external legitimacy over the years, with a slight rise in 2013 that remains consistent through 2020. Kosovo, on the other hand, enjoyed comparatively high levels of external legitimacy from the outset in 2005, with a slight increase in 2008 that remains steady through 2020. Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic shows some variation in its level of legitimacy from 2013 to 2019, while Somaliland has displayed a gradual increase in its level of external legitimacy since 2013. South Ossetia, similar

to Abkhazia, had three periods of increase in 2008 and 2013. Finally, the TRNC exhibits relatively stable levels of external legitimacy, with some slight variations and higher levels of legitimacy from 2016 to 2019.

Figure 12: Predicted External Legitimacy



Point estimates represent the mean value. Lines denote 95% percent confidence intervals.

3.6 Discussion

The empirical results demonstrate the continuous nature of de facto state international status and confirm the theoretical expectations for the six attributes, notably hypothesis 1-6. Specifically, the conjoint survey results indicate that membership in an IO, recognition by a UN member state, support from a Great Power, a democratic regime type, the absence of other separatist movements in the region, and reclaiming former territory are crucial factors for the external legitimacy of de facto states. The findings also suggest that there is multidimensional decision-making taking place

as the attributes all fall within the same range (3.16 to 3.43) on the seven-point scale. This illustrates that it is likely the combined effect of attributes that determines whether de facto states are perceived to have high or low levels of external legitimacy, also confirming this study's expectations.³¹ This finding is reflected in the literature with scholars emphasizing the significance of diversifying a state's external relations, as dependence on a single external patron can hinder a de facto state's international image (Caspersen 2009; Bakke et al. 2018). As such, it may be crucial for de facto states to cultivate relationships with multiple external partners and organizations to establish a more diverse and robust international presence. Furthermore, by ranking de facto states on a spectrum, the survey reveals that experts perceive, perhaps implicitly, varying levels of legitimacy for these entities. Given that many de facto states exist in the international system without recognition for extended periods, it is likely more fruitful to focus on understanding what drives their integration into international society and enhances their external legitimacy rather than to solely focus on the factors that grant them official formal recognition.

Of note, the rank-order of the attributes diverges from the findings of the conjoint experiment. Although both rank IO membership as the most crucial attribute for external legitimacy, the survey results prioritize territorial claim as second, no separatist movement in the region as third, and Great Power support as fifth. In contrast, the conjoint results consider territorial claim the least important, no separatist movement in the region as fifth, and Great Power support as the second most important attribute. This discrepancy suggests that there may exist a disconnect between what experts explicitly perceive to be important and what attributes they implicitly believe

³¹ It is possible that some important attributes were not included in the conjoint experiment, but it is unlikely to have affected the results significantly. Please see a further discussion of this in SI File Section 1.3 in Appendix B.

to have an effect on external legitimacy. Explicitly, while domestic conditions are deemed critical for external legitimacy decisions, interest-based *realpolitik* factors such as Great Power support are implicitly valued more. This disconnect mirrors international practices where certain standards and guidelines may exist to guide the process of recognition and yet it often still occurs in a "political and legal grey area" (Newman and Vioska 2018). This lends further support for the use of a conjoint experiment, which captures experts' opinions indirectly, and offers as an essential tool for obtaining a comprehensive understanding of how external legitimacy is determined.

Both the conjoint analysis and rank-order findings emphasize the crucial role of IO membership in determining the external legitimacy of *de facto* states. This discovery aligns with the social acceptance perspective, which underscores the significance of engaging with the international community in order to establish a *de facto* state's international standing. **Figure 9** further supports the importance of social acceptance as it appears to be the first dimension in the plot. Thus, this study emphasizes the vital role of *de facto* states being acknowledged and accepted by recognized states for their external legitimacy. The indicators that hold the utmost importance for external legitimacy are those that reflect a peer recognition of *de facto* states as legitimate entities. Notably, the distinction between *de facto* state international status as a binary phenomenon (recognition) and as a continuous concept (external legitimacy) reveals potential differences. While Great Power support is often emphasized as a crucial factor for a prospective state's international recognition in the literature, this study found that IO membership and recognition by a UN member state are more critical for advancing *de facto* states along the external legitimacy

spectrum.³² This work suggests the need to distinguish analytically between the two concepts, as what matters for recognition may not be the same as what matters for external legitimacy. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that experts perceive external legitimacy as a two-dimensional space encompassing both internal conditions and external acceptance. These findings call for further research to delve deeper into the conceptualization of external legitimacy by experts and the interplay of de facto state internal conditions and external relations.

The study not only aimed to explore the factors contributing to the external legitimacy of de facto states but also sought to uncover potential subgroup differences in expert preferences regarding these attributes. These significant findings provide valuable insights into the varying importance of these factors in different regions and among diverse respondents. While the conjoint analysis did not yield statistically significant differences between subgroups, the rank-order results did reveal notable distinctions. Diplomats, for instance, placed a higher value on social acceptance preferences such as IO membership and UN member recognition. In contrast, academics ranked territorial claim and the absence of a separatist movement in the region as the most important factors, while considering being democratic as the least important. Supporting Hypothesis 9, I found evidence that academics ranked Great Power support higher, albeit only one rank higher (ranked as 4) compared to diplomats (ranked as 5). The study also revealed slight variations in the importance of different factors across regions, particularly among experts from Asia and Latin America. However, there is limited evidence supporting Hypotheses 7 and 8, which suggested that Western respondents would attribute higher value to democracy, IO membership, and recognition

³² UN member recognition was higher in the rank-order and tied Great Power support in the conjoint. As a result, UN member recognition is considered to be valued higher overall in the survey.

by a UN member state compared to non-Western respondents. Surprisingly, both North American and European respondents ranked being democratic as the least important factor, while IO membership and UN member recognition held the 3rd and 5th positions for both regions.

One possible explanation for these disparities is that diplomats, as representatives within the international system, prioritize the concept of "collective recognition" aligning with the standards of the international liberal system. They may also exhibit caution in setting a precedent that allows a de facto state to assert territorial claims. Conversely, academics may place a stronger emphasis on domestic criteria of statehood due to their professional focus on states and other institutional phenomena, as well as their inclination toward institutionalist theorizing.³³

These findings may reflect demographic differences of the respondents or could be influenced by the relatively small sample size. **Figures 10** and **11** illustrate a trend where the arrowed lines predominantly fall on the left side of the plot, with only a few value points on the right side. This suggests a significant similarity in the preferences of the respondents. Nevertheless, caution is warranted when interpreting these results due to the relatively small sample size. Further research is necessary to determine whether there is a shared global understanding of the factors influencing de facto states' international status or if there are potential differences based on region and profession. Additional inquiry is especially valuable considering that respondents such as diplomats may play a role in decision-making regarding de facto state international status.

The study's predicted external legitimacy results offer insights into the nuanced and continuous nature of external legitimacy for de facto states, highlighting significant variation

³³ These are speculative statements, and further research is required to ascertain the reasons behind these observed differences.

observed across different states. It also underscores the importance of tracking temporal changes in the international status of de facto states, as only the PMR had the same stagnant level of legitimacy over time. In so doing, it identifies the importance of conceiving de facto states external legitimacy as a continuous phenomenon rather than a discrete category. It also emphasizes the need to explore what conditions or factors might lead to increases in de facto external legitimacy in some cases and not in others, beyond those considered here. While some de facto states are excluded from the international community, these findings confirm the recent work on *engagement without recognition* that de facto states can be accepted to various extents in the international community.

Taiwan and Kosovo are often considered entities with higher levels of international status that are "just short of independence," resulting in what Berg and Toomla refer to as a "quasi-recognition." (Berg and Toomla 2009). This is reflected in the results, as both states have the highest levels of external legitimacy. However, the other seven de facto states, show greater variation in predicted legitimacy than what is typically reflected in the literature, indicating a potential disconnect between expert perceptions and empirical conceptions. For example, while Berg and Toomlas' (2009) 'Normalization Index' groups Abkhazia, PMR (Transnistria), Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Somaliland as part of the "boycott zone," these findings show significant differences in the level of acceptance of these states, particularly for Abkhazia. These discrepancies between expert perceptions and the literature suggest that further research is needed to differentiate between de facto states with varying levels of external legitimacy. It also calls into question the labelling of these states as "pariahs", collectively "ignored", and "not accepted" in the international community (Bartmann 2004; Steinsdorff and Fruhstorfer 2012).

3.7 Conclusion

Despite the increasing relevance of de facto states in the international system, previous research on the factors that contribute to their external legitimacy has been inadequate. This study addresses this gap by presenting the opinions of experts in academia and diplomacy on the key drivers of external legitimacy for de facto states. This study has shed light on the factors that contribute to the external legitimacy of de facto states and the nuanced and continuous nature of their international status. The findings highlight the importance of engagement in international society, particularly IO membership, and recognition by a UN member state for advancing de facto states along the external legitimacy spectrum. Moreover, the study has uncovered potential subgroup differences in expert preferences towards these attributes and highlighted the importance of tracking temporal changes in the international status of de facto states. The predicted external legitimacy results also provide insights into the varying levels of external legitimacy exhibited by different de facto states, with experts distinguishing between entities with differing levels of legitimacy. Similar to other recent work on de facto state status, this article underscores the need to pay greater attention to the differences between de facto state external relations rather than grouping them together based on their international non-status (Ker-Lindsay 2015; Berg and Toomla 2009; Huddleston 2020).

The implications of this study have the potential to extend beyond academic inquiry. As de facto states tend to emulate successful state behaviour, these findings may offer practical applications and concrete policy recommendations for increasing their international status. The findings of this study are also encouraging for de facto states, as they suggest that the most crucial factors for improving their external legitimacy are within their control. While perhaps an intuitive finding, engaging in strategic outreach and building bilateral and multilateral relations with

recognized states, de facto states can increase their international status and improve their standing in the international community. Yet, this offers a practical way for de facto states to allocate their resources more effectively rather than concerning themselves with factors which are beyond their power to change. By doing so, these entities can increase their chances of gaining a more prominent role in the international system.

The presence of de facto states in the international system presents an enduring and significant challenge for policymakers and scholars alike seeking to effectively manage their contested relations. As we move beyond the notion that "states and unrecognized states do not play together," (Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2008), we can witness how UN member states are increasingly engaging with de facto states in strategic ways, including policies of *engagement without recognition* or through the dual recognition of the parent and seceding state (Ker-Lindsay 2015; Rich and Dahmer 2019). Rather than maintaining a policy of non-recognition, it is becoming increasingly clear that engagement may be a more effective means of resolving international conflicts as both isolationism and dependency on a single external patron are counterproductive to the conflict resolution of de facto states (Berg and Ker-Lindsay 2018). Thus, it is imperative that policymakers and scholars seeking sustainable solutions for these contested states consider strategic ways to engage with and integrate de facto states into the global arena.

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4 Striking a Balance? De Facto State Endurance and Legitimacy

4.1 Abstract

This study analyzes the strategic choices that de facto states must make in their pursuit of international recognition and domestic stability. Through 35 semi-structured interviews with government officials from Somaliland and Kosovo, this study highlights the strategies of recognition and survival and the significant challenges that de facto states face in balancing these two goals. Both states invest heavily in their security, socioeconomic development, and internal governance structures to survive. They rely on informal diplomacy, emphasizing their contributions to the international system, regional organization integration, and strategic alignment with the West for recognition. However, there are key differences in their approaches, with Somaliland relying more on self-reliance while Kosovo partners with the international community. The study sheds light on the intricate nature of statehood and instability in the international system, showcasing how the pursuit of greater recognition for the goal of future survival can impede a state's contemporary efforts to strengthen its domestic stability. This research has important implications for debates in International Relations. It provides a nuanced understanding of the international conditions that lead to significant challenges for de facto states in balancing international recognition and domestic stability, highlighting the need for continued exploration into the interplay between these goals.

4.2 Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, international recognition plays a pivotal role in the success of any political entity. Without it, states are excluded from the numerous benefits of the international system, including access to global trade, investments, and participation in international organizations. De facto states encounter complex challenges due to their failure to secure full sovereignty internationally. As a result, they are often subject to unequal treatment in the international arena and may face slower progress in terms of domestic development. Although the specific challenges faced by de facto states may differ depending on their level of international engagement, all face the unfortunate reality of functioning as a state without the legal protection afforded to UN members. As a result, they are at risk of being reintegrated into their recognized parent state (Fabry 2017). This precarious position between statehood and non-recognition compels de facto states to focus on two main goals: survival and the pursuit of greater recognition.

Scholars have extensively studied strategies that de facto states can pursue to ensure their survival, including investing in security, democratizing, bolstering internal legitimacy, and establishing patron-client relationships (Caspersen 2000; Kolsto 2006; Kolsto and Blakkisrud 2008; Lynch 2002; Caspersen 2012; Beachain 2012; Kolsto 2021). Additionally, research has examined how de facto states can increase their chances of recognition through both informal and formal avenues of interaction, legal claims to statehood, engaging with Great Powers, pursuing remedial secession, and establishing relations with regional and international bodies (Coggins 2011; Ker Lindsay 2015). However, existing scholarship has largely overlooked the interaction between the two imperatives. This is problematic as the two goals appear to be deeply intertwined, though pursuing one goal may come at the expense of the other. As such, working to attain these goals often requires a delicate and calculated balance. Further research is needed to understand

the interplay between the goals of recognition and survival for de facto states. This article seeks to remedy this gap in the literature by asking: How do de facto states balance the drive for greater recognition with their need to sustain themselves? In so doing, it identifies the strategies de facto states might pursue in the attainment of greater recognition and survival and considers the challenging dynamics that exist between the two imperatives. It demonstrates how these dynamics can result in exploitative relationships and inequitable agreements. The paper argues that de facto states often prioritize international recognition at the expense of statebuilding to improve their chances of survival. However, the de facto state's level of engagement with recognized states shapes the consequences of their strategies.

The article first outlines the main objectives of de facto states and their position in the international system, exploring the difficult international conditions they face. Drawing on existing literature on statehood, statebuilding, and recognition, the article identifies the strategies de facto states use to survive and pursue greater recognition and the challenges they face given their subordinate status. It then outlines the case selection of Somaliland and Kosovo, highlighting their usefulness in exploring this topic given the variation in their levels of international legitimacy. The case studies are grounded in 35 semi-structured elite interviews with government officials from both states. The study then evaluates Kosovo and Somaliland's survival and recognition strategies. The findings reveal that both states heavily invest in their security apparatuses, their socioeconomic development and internal governance structures to ensure their survival. To achieve recognition, they rely on informal channels of diplomacy, emphasize their earned statehood, legal rights to statehood, and strategically align themselves with the West. However, their approaches differ, with Somaliland being more self-reliant in its strategies while Kosovo generally pursues recognition and survival in partnership with the international community. Additionally, the study finds that

Somaliland has shifted its policy over time to highlighting its geostrategic location over its empirical case for statehood.

The final section of the study sheds light on the key challenges faced by de facto states in their pursuit of greater recognition and domestic stability. While these goals can reinforce one another, they can also present significant obstacles. The study highlights how complex trade-offs exist between these two objectives, given the exclusionary nature of the international club of states, which is often guided by the interests of powerful international actors rather than the principles of the liberal rules-based order. As a result, more isolated de facto states, such as Somaliland, may face development stalemates due to a lack of engagement. In contrast, with higher levels of international engagement, Kosovo struggles to balance the demands of the international community with the democratic will of its people. Furthermore, this study finds that due to their subordinate status, both Somaliland and Kosovo face exploitative relationships and unfair bargains that may advance their international standing but harm their domestic stability.

This paper contributes to the existing literature on de facto states by critically assessing the strategies pursued by two such entities, Somaliland, and Kosovo, in their respective quests for international recognition and domestic stability. Through a comparative analysis, this paper demonstrates the nuances that distinguish their approaches, given their level of international engagement and the impact it has had on their trajectories. Additionally, it reveals how both entities face comparable challenges in balancing their strategic goals despite having disparate levels of external legitimacy. The study finds that both Somaliland and Kosovo often prioritize strategies of greater recognition and integration at the expense of current survival initiatives in the hope of securing long-term endurance. As such, this study sheds light on key debates in International Relations, system membership, stability, diplomacy, and international order,

by exploring the precarious position of de facto states in the international system and the calculated and costly choices they must make to achieve their objectives.

4.3 Endurance and Legitimacy

To understand the strategies employed by de facto states to achieve recognition and survival, it is crucial to first contextualize their goals and how they relate to the conditions of the international state system. Statehood has become increasingly attractive for prospective states as the criteria for membership have shifted (Fazal and Griffiths 2014). Membership in the international community endows a state with various tangible and intangible benefits, such as legitimacy, decision-making power in international organizations, economic assistance, and physical security (Osterud 1997; Fazal and Griffiths 2014). Membership is now a necessity, and without it, de facto states can feel trapped within a "prison" in the international system (Personal Interview, December 2022). De facto states often emerge from civil wars with a dark legacy of violence and subjugation, making reintegration virtually non-negotiable. Consequently, de facto states are in a difficult position where they cannot rejoin their parent state and simultaneously fail to receive substantial recognition. This lack of recognition profoundly impacts de facto states, as evidenced by their persistent sense of insecurity, limited social development, and citizens' restricted freedom of movement. These challenges make progress difficult for de facto states and highlight the significance of their pursuit of greater recognition as a fundamental goal.

While de facto states, by their very nature, can exist without unanimous international recognition, the lack of recognition can significantly hinder their development. Without recognition, these states remain as lesser entities and are forced to endure an "existentially insecure" existence in the international system (Berg and Molder 2012). This insecurity is particularly pronounced given that most de facto states are small, marginal states, which are at greater risk of territorial challenges (Berg and Vits 2018). Lacking

sovereignty, de facto states feel vulnerable to being eliminated by force at any point by their parent state with no legal recourse (Lynch 2004, p. 104). As political entities, the fundamental goal of de facto states is to endure. While other new states receive support from international and regional organizations for their statebuilding initiatives, de facto states often face the burden of state development alone. Despite these challenges, some de facto states such as Taiwan, Kosovo and Somaliland have made significant efforts toward statebuilding, establishing effective political entities, and moving beyond mere survival (Dembinska and Campana, 2017).

De facto states employ various strategies to achieve their objectives. Extensive research has been conducted to understand these strategies, resulting in the identification of several tactics summarized in **Table 6**. To achieve recognition, de facto states frequently engage in multi-track international interactions, including both formal diplomacy and informal engagements with other states and international bodies (Snow and Cull, 2020; Chen, 1951). While they typically cannot engage formally with recognized states, de facto states have successfully pursued political, economic, and social informal engagement with other countries to increase their international integration (Toomla 2016). Another important avenue in which de facto states can strategically achieve their goals is by advocating for their recognition case and seeking membership and engagement with international and regional bodies. As Visoka and Newman find (2020), these organizations play a significant role in the process of prospective states receiving recognition.

Research also suggests that de facto states justify their claim to statehood based on “empirical evidence and performance” (Pegg 2017). They argue that their capacity and adherence to international norms demonstrate their worthiness for recognition (Richards 2014). The criterion for earned statehood includes achieving a satisfactory level of good governance and legal guarantees, which includes protecting human rights, disarming, and demobilizing, developing democratic institutions, establishing the rule of

law, and promoting regional stability (Williams and Pecci 2004, p.367). As such, de facto states can showcase their efforts towards democratization, capacity building, adherence to global norms, and other indicators to demonstrate their acceptability as a strategy for recognition.³⁴

Research has also highlighted how de facto states strategically use their legal right to statehood as a recognition strategy. This approach includes different arguments based on the *Montevideo Convention*, where de facto states assert that they possess the characteristics and functions of a state and should, therefore, be recognized as one (Laoutides 2015; Ryngaert and Sobrie 2011). The second aspect of this strategy involves claiming control over territory based on colonial borders or prior statehood (Griffiths and Martinez 2021). The final component is the remedial right, which emphasizes the grievances of the population by the state they are seceding from and argues that statehood is necessary to address these issues (Brilmayer 1991; Buchanan 1991, 2004).

Research has also revealed the reliance of de facto states on Great Power supporters to aid in their recognition efforts (Coggins 2011; 2014). Great Powers possess significant wealth and global influence, which could enhance external legitimacy and the probability of recognition for a prospective state. Recognition from a Great Power is particularly significant, as Fabry (2010, p. 8) argues “recognition by the great powers has normally preceded, and carried far more weight than, recognition by other states. Indeed, the latter have normally looked to the former for direction; where they did not, their expeditiousness was likely of little import.” In addition, Great Powers can use their influence to push the agenda for de

³⁴ The empirical evidence for the effectiveness of this strategy is weak, though it remains a central recognition strategy for de facto states.

facto states on the international stage. As a result, this strategy has been identified in the literature as a crucial means for de facto states to enhance their international legitimacy.

De facto states also employ a range of strategies to ensure their survival and advance their statebuilding agenda (Caspersen 2008; Kolsto 2006; Kolsto and Blakkisrud 2008; Kolsto and Blakkisrud 2008; Caspersen 2012). A crucial aspect of these strategies is an investment in their security apparatuses. Caspersen claims that a lack of recognition creates a "powerful incentive for building an effective entity; an entity which can defend itself" (p.105). Supplementing this, Lynch (2002) attributes this highly militarized strategy of de facto states to the fact that leaders in de facto states have "no faith in the rule of law" (p.841). Berg and Molder (2012) also find that de facto states like Artsakh, which are highly insecure, have a large number of individuals serving in the standing army or reserves (roughly 32% of the population) (p.537). As such, security has been identified as an important strategy of survival.

Scholarship has also explored the patron-client relationship between de facto states and their patron states. This relationship involves the patron state providing military and financial support to the de facto state to ensure its survival (Ó Beacháin & Tsurtssumia-Zurabashvili 2016; Bakke et al. 2014; Pegg 2017). For instance, Russia's relationship with Abkhazia and the PMR, and Turkey's relationship with the TRNC, serve as examples of patron-client relations. However, the dependency of de facto states on their patron state is a subject of conflicting research (Pegg 2017). Some studies suggest that de facto states rely solely on their patron state to sustain essential state functions (Spanke 2019), while others argue that de facto states can exert significant agency within the relationship and should be viewed as more than mere puppets (Bakke et al. 2018; Berg and Vits 2018). Nevertheless, this dynamic is widely acknowledged as a vital survival strategy for de facto states.

While numerous studies have explored how de facto states consolidate their power, recent research has pointed out that these entities can also employ less coercive methods to ensure their survival, such as building public trust (Bakke et al. 2014). Internal legitimacy, as determined by citizens' perceptions of their state's provision of public goods such as economic development, health services, safety, and security, can play a significant role in the survival of a de facto state (Bakke et al. 2014). Positive opinions regarding these functions increase the likelihood of the state's survival. In addition, democratization is viewed as a crucial factor in ensuring the stability and survival of de facto states (Broers 2013; Caspersen 2008, 2011; Richards 2014; Voller 2013). As Richards and Smith (2015) argue, societal investment and support, in the absence of external support, will ultimately determine the success of statebuilding processes in unrecognized states, making democratization essential (p.1729). Therefore, de facto states have increasingly recognized the importance of investing in their citizens' well-being, democratizing and strengthening their institutions to gain public trust and legitimacy.

Table 6: Strategies of Recognition and Survival

Recognition Strategy	Survival Strategy
Formal and Informal Diplomacy	Security
Accession to International and Regional Bodies	Internal Legitimacy/Public Trust Initiatives
Earned Statehood	Establish Patron-Client relationship
Legal Right to Statehood	
Support from Great Power	

Scholars are increasingly recognizing a significant gap in the literature, particularly in comprehending the interaction between the "dimensions of endurance" and the external relations of states (Dembinska and Campana 2017). Some of the strategies mentioned above can demonstrate how the pursuit of recognition and the goal of survival have the potential to be mutually reinforcing. Take, for example, public trust initiatives. While primarily a survival strategy, these initiatives can also serve as a recognition strategy by increasing a state's internal legitimacy and democratization. This, in turn, can promote stability within the state and highlight the viability of de facto states as independent entities, having the potential to aid them in earning them recognition and acceptance as legitimate states (Caspersen 2012; Pegg 2017). Pursuing Great Powers' support and adopting the survival strategy of securitization of the state can also work hand in hand.³⁵ By seeking Great Powers' assistance, de facto states can ensure their survival by receiving military aid, training, and deterrence against parent states attempting to reabsorb them (Coggins 2011, 2014; Siroky et al. 2021). This approach can also aid in the securitization of the state, as having the backing of a more powerful country can strengthen a de facto state's legitimacy and standing in the international community (Coggins 2011 2014; Siroky et al. 2021).

While the examples provided demonstrate the potential synergy of these two integral goals of de facto states, the relationship between these goals are often much more complex in practice given the harsh conditions of the international system for de facto states. Prior to World War II, states were created internally, as those with capacity were recognized and those without were weeded out (Jackson and

³⁵ There is likely more strategies that overlap in a complementary way. Great Power support and an external patron might go hand in hand as evident in the post-soviet cases such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Nonetheless, this article highlighted the strategies that seemed to directly work towards both goals.

Rosberg 1982). However, the process of international state recognition has experienced significant changes in the past century, with the decreased role of internal capacity in state-making and the increased importance of external state formation during the decolonization era (Jackson and Rosberg 1982). Despite that many of them have the internal capacity to have seceded successfully in the past, de facto states now face the challenge of lobbying other states and international organizations for entry into the exclusive group of states (Ostreud 1997).

De facto states face a unique challenge in the international system as they lack sovereignty, leaving them in a state of limbo for extended periods of time. This lack of international recognition makes them vulnerable to unfavorable conditions that can force them to make difficult trade-offs. De facto states often face unequal treatment in the international system, particularly in terms of meeting the expectations and standards demanded by the international community or individual states. This can create a direct contestation between pursuing greater recognition and their survival strategies. Citizens in de facto states may feel that the demands of other states and international bodies are too much, coming at the cost of public trust which leads to a difficult balancing act for de facto states.

De facto states face these challenges due to two systemic conditions in the international system. First, in today's globalized world, participation in the international system is crucial for a country's development and for its people to attain a certain standard of living. As many scholars have discussed, being a part of the international system is essential for accessing resources, physical security, negotiating trade agreements, and building diplomatic relationships (Caspersen 2011; Fazal and Griffiths 2014; Ker-Lindsay 2015). Second, the international system has been dominated by strong states since 1945, granting them the power to determine which entities are recognized as sovereign states (Fabry 2010; Coggins 2011). These "gatekeepers" of the international system are primarily driven by self-interest (Coggins 2014).

Despite the existence of a rules-based system, the empirical qualifications of a state have proven to be insufficient for de facto states to gain international recognition. The process of international state recognition is instead guided by a neorealist logic which creates "structural constraints for de facto states navigating the international system" (Berg and Vits, 2018).³⁶ De facto state must actively pursue recognition and greater integration while navigating a complex landscape of power dynamics. In this context, de facto states must make calculated decisions to achieve their objectives, often with significant costs.

Due to the systemic conditions outlined above, de facto states often prioritize strategies of international recognition over contemporary efforts of survival, with the aim that this decision will lead to the future sustainability and stability of their state. For de facto states, integration offers the prospects of security. De facto states can develop strong allies by building bilateral relationships and joining international and regional organizations. These allies become invested in the continued existence of the de facto state, making it more difficult for these states to be eliminated. However, this prioritization comes with consequences, which vary depending on the degree of international engagement of the de facto state. For de facto states with low levels of international engagement, isolation and low development are common challenges, which can make it difficult in attempting to navigate the complexities of the international system. This can leave them vulnerable to exploitative relationships and unfair bargains, further hindering their progress in achieving international recognition and survival. On the other hand, de facto states with

³⁶ A neorealist logic refers to the broader systemic condition that guides international relations, where weaker or marginalized states often experience political and economic vulnerability. These states lack the ability to act as "agenda setters" on the global stage and therefore, their actions are often influenced by the "benevolence of larger powers" (Berg and Vits 2018).

greater international involvement face a different set of challenges. Issues of vested interests and geopolitical power play become more prevalent, which can delay their progress internationally and lead to an erosion of public trust internally. In this way, de facto states face unique challenges depending on their level of international engagement, each with their own set of trade-offs and strategic considerations.

As I approached the interviews, I held three distinct expectations based on the international conditions discussed above. First, I expected that de facto states would prioritize pursuing strategies of recognition and greater integration, even if it meant compromising their current statebuilding and stability initiatives. This is because securing recognition, integration and legitimacy on the international stage are crucial for the long-term survival of their state. Second, I expected that de facto states with low levels of international engagement would be more inclined to enter into biased deals and relationships. Given their isolation, lower levels of development, and subordinate status internationally, I expected that these states would be more desperate to attract foreign investment and alliances through any means necessary. Last, I hypothesized that de facto states with higher levels of engagement would face more tradeoffs. Despite attaining partial recognition, heightened international involvement brings forth vested interests from states engaged in the conflict, likely resulting in an inevitable need for these de facto states to make greater concessions in order to satisfy the concerned parties or organizations.

In the subsequent sections, the hypotheses will be thoroughly examined using the case studies of Somaliland and Kosovo. By scrutinizing their respective strategies, this analysis aims to illustrate how the consequences associated with balancing recognition and survival materialize in distinct ways contingent upon the extent of international engagement exhibited by each de facto state. Through these case studies, I will explore the challenges that de facto states face in their pursuit of international recognition and survival, highlighting the strategic maneuverings that they deem necessary for their long-term success.

4.4 Research Design

From October 2022 to March 2023, a total of 35 semi-structured elite interviews were conducted with government officials from Somaliland and Kosovo. The study defined government officials as public servants and elected officials, with most interviewees being Ministers and Deputy Ministers, as well as government officials from respective foreign affairs and executive offices. The interviews were conducted through various methods, including nine in-person interviews in Kosovo, two telephone interviews, and twenty-four interviews via Zoom video calls. The main objective of the interviews was to gain a better understanding of how de facto states operate and survive in an international system that does not fully recognize their existence. To achieve this, the interview questions were carefully curated to uncover the strategies employed by de facto states to survive and seek greater recognition. The study aimed to assess whether the strategies highlighted by scholars are evident in the two cases, providing valuable evidence to evaluate existing literature on the topic.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain insights into the challenges and trade-offs that de facto states encounter in their efforts to balance their two goals. This article exclusively focuses on the viewpoints of de facto state elites in order to assess their perspectives. It is worth noting, however, that this article does not offer a comprehensive overview that includes the viewpoints of parent states, external state actors, and regional and international organizations. These entities may hold differing opinions, which are acknowledged and, when applicable, emphasized in this article. The interviews were conducted confidentially, unless participants indicated otherwise. The research design demonstrates a comprehensive and rigorous approach to understanding the strategies employed by de facto states towards survival and recognition. More information on this study, particularly regarding the sampling technique used, can be found in SI file 1 in Appendix D.

The case selection for this study was based on the “diverse case” selection method, which seeks to achieve maximum variation along relevant dimensions (Gerring 2008). Kosovo and Somaliland were selected based on their differences in levels of international engagement, development, and regional contexts. The purpose of case studies is to provide insight into the broader population of interest (Gerring 2008; Seawright and Gerring 2008). Therefore, these two de facto states were chosen to provide insight into how states make calculated decisions about their legitimacy and recognition in varying international and domestic contexts.

Somaliland and Kosovo, two small de facto states, have encountered significant challenges in navigating the international environment due to their contested status and their relationships with their parent states. Somaliland declared its independence from Somalia in 1991 following the collapse of the central government. This declaration marked the emergence of Somaliland as a de facto state with its own political institutions, security forces, and governance structures (Kaplan 2008). Despite its efforts to seek international recognition as a sovereign state, Somaliland has faced limited success in gaining widespread recognition. Currently, Taiwan is the only country that formally recognizes Somaliland, while the rest of the international community recognizes Somalia as the sovereign state encompassing Somaliland.

Somaliland's decision to separate from Somalia was primarily driven by the desire to escape the political turmoil and violence that plagued the rest of the country. In response, Somaliland has focused on statebuilding, democratization, and attracting foreign investment to establish stability (Bradbury 2003). It has adopted a hybrid-traditional model of governance that combines modern democratic practices with elements of traditional governance systems. This approach involves incorporating traditional leaders (clan elders) into decision-making processes to ensure community participation and conflict resolution based on local norms and customs (Kaplan 2008). In terms of demographics Somaliland is predominately a

homogenous population. Despite the lack of international recognition, Somaliland has managed to build functioning institutions, hold democratic elections, and maintain a relatively stable political environment (Renders and Terlinden 2010).

The relationship between Somaliland and Somalia has been characterized by tensions and occasional conflicts. However, due to Somaliland's greater stability and capacity compared to Somalia, its parent state has had limited influence over Somaliland (Bryden 2004). Somaliland has managed its own affairs and has sought to establish itself as a separate and functioning state. Somalia has been preoccupied with its internal challenges, including political instability, ongoing conflict with militant groups, and difficulty in establishing a central government (Bryden 2004; Lalos 2011). As a result, Somalia has had limited involvement in the domestic affairs of Somaliland.

Kosovo's path to de facto statehood was shaped by the breakup of Yugoslavia and the subsequent conflicts in the 1990s. After the war in 1999, Kosovo came under the administration of the UN, establishing itself as a separate entity from Serbia. Kosovo formally declared independence in 2008. Unlike Somaliland, Kosovo has achieved a higher level of international recognition, with approximately 104 UN member states recognizing it as an independent state. Kosovo is also considered a multiethnic state. However, its sovereignty is not universally accepted, as some countries, including Serbia, Russia, and China, do not recognize it as an independent state. Nevertheless, Kosovo has actively engaged with the international community and has endeavored to establish itself as a responsible actor in regional stability, human rights, and pursuing democratic governance. In terms of democratization, Kosovo has made significant progress in establishing democratic institutions and processes (Cocozzelli 2013). It has implemented extensive reforms to strengthen the rule of law, promote minority rights, and foster a multi-ethnic and inclusive society.

The relationship between Kosovo and Serbia has been complex and marked by deep-seated tensions. Serbia considers Kosovo an integral part of its territory and vehemently opposes its independence (Guzina and Marijan 2014). Serbia has used its influence to block Kosovo's membership in international organizations and has sought to informally extend control over the predominantly Serbian areas within Kosovo (Szpala 2016). The issue of Kosovo's status remains a significant obstacle to the normalization of relations between the two entities. Despite these challenges, both Kosovo and Serbia have engaged in dialogue and negotiations under the auspices of the EU, aiming to find a mutually acceptable solution and improve their relationship.

Overall, both Somaliland and Kosovo have faced significant obstacles in their efforts to establish themselves as independent entities and gain international recognition. While Kosovo has achieved a higher level of recognition, its relationship with Serbia remains contentious. Somaliland, on the other hand, has managed to build functional institutions and maintain relative stability despite the lack of international recognition. It also has limited domestic interference from Somalia. Both entities continue to strive for greater democratization and the consolidation of their statehood in a challenging international environment. The selection of Kosovo and Somaliland as case studies enables the evaluation of strategies employed by de facto states at varying levels of international engagement and recognition. As will be demonstrated throughout the article, the strategies implemented by these entities are shaped by their unique geopolitical contexts. Understanding these dynamics is essential for comprehending the subsequent sections of this article, which delve into the strategies employed by de facto states in their pursuit of recognition and survival.

4.5 Strategies of Survival and Recognition

4.5.1 Somaliland Strategies

Over the past three decades, Somaliland has faced the challenging task of surviving in isolation from the international community. As a result, the country has relied heavily on its own resources, leading to significant investments in security and institution-building. The primary objective for Somaliland has been to ensure its continued existence, which has been achieved through a multifaceted approach. In light of their international isolation, Somaliland has adopted a bottom-up approach to constructing state institutions, with a focus on creating robust systems for governance and security to ensure stability and self-resilience. In analyzing Somaliland's survival strategies, four key components emerge: security, democratization and human rights, self-reliance, and economic diversification and foreign investment.

Somaliland *prioritizes security*, allocating 40% of its budget annually to bolstering its security apparatus (Personal Interview, January 2023). All male university students spend a mandatory six-year term in the military, which has resulted in a specialized force of 4,000 personnel responsible for intelligence and controlling trafficking, piracy, ports, airports, and borders (Personal Interview, October 2022). Police forces are also highly active, ensuring little civil conflict. Officials credit an active civil society as the key factor contributing to peace, with citizens taking an active role in reporting suspicious activity to protect their “pocket of peace” in the Horn of Africa (Personal Interview, November 2022). Somaliland's efforts to combat terrorism are critical to its broader survival strategy, given the region's instability and presence of terrorist groups. The country has also been proactively working to reduce tensions with neighboring Puntland. Mohamed Omer Hagi Mohamoud, the Somaliland Ambassador to Taiwan, emphasized this point, stating, “If we can resolve our internal problems, we can also try to manage what's happening around us... We become a bulwark against piracy and terrorism from our neighbours” (Personal Interview,

February 2023). However, despite their commitment to peace and stability, Somaliland faces significant challenges in accessing military equipment due to its isolation from the international community. Their subsequent reliance on the black market for arms poses significant risks to their efforts, highlighting the need for external partners (Personal Interview, October 2022).

Somaliland *prioritizes democratization and human rights* as being crucial to its survival strategy, achieving one of the highest Freedom House rankings in Africa. Somaliland's statebuilding process is characterized by a distinct and innovative approach that combines traditional Somali concepts of governance, based on consultation and consent, with a modern state apparatus (Kaplan 2008). This unique hybrid democracy was established through the collaborative efforts of clan leaders, who played a crucial role in consolidating peace through conferences. The incorporation of Somali traditions is evident in the appointed House of Elders, known as the "Guurti," while more liberal democratic principles are represented through the elected House of Representatives. This governance system effectively mitigates the influence of clannism and regionalism in the democratic process (Personal Interview, November 2022).³⁷ This has contributed to its successful disarmament of different clans in the 1990s and their ability to hold six peaceful general elections since 1997 (Personal Interview, November 2022). However, officials acknowledge that there is still work to be done, particularly regarding women's rights. Despite recent tensions in the democratic process, Somaliland remains dedicated to democracy and human rights as a cornerstone of maintaining stability and security in a volatile region. The government believes that these values are "the

³⁷ For a more detailed description of the democratic governance structures of Somaliland see: Hansen and Bradbury 2007; Kaplan 2008; Renders and Terlinden 2010; Hoehne 2013.

key ingredient that made this country the country that can survive despite the international community's lack of support" (Personal Interview, October 2022).

Somaliland's proactive steps to *increase self-reliance* have become an integral part of its strategies for survival. The country has recognized the importance of safeguarding its largest industry - livestock, which not only sustains the population but also fuels trade with several Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Personal Interview, November 2022). Consequently, the government has put in place measures to protect this industry, such as dedicated funds to support farmers during times of drought or other challenges, acknowledging that external support or aid may not always be forthcoming (Personal Interview, December 2022). In 2022, Somaliland's resilience was put to the test when a fire destroyed its largest flea market in the capital city of Hargeisa, resulting in losses estimated at 1.5 billion dollars (Personal Interview, October 2022). Despite the enormity of the loss, Somaliland was able to mobilize resources quickly, raising 8 million dollars from its diaspora community to create temporary markets and ensure food availability for its citizens (Personal Interview, October 2022). As the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Essa Kayd, noted, "if we waited for the international community to help, we would still be waiting." (Personal Interview, October 2022). This episode highlights the significance of their self-sufficiency and their reliance on themselves as a key strategy of survival.

Somaliland's strategies for survival also include *economic diversification and foreign investment* to increase stability and prosperity. Somaliland recognizes the need to reduce its reliance on a single industry and are working to open themselves up to foreign investment. They had been successful in doing so with the development of Berbera port with the assistance of the UAE's DP World, which has boosted the country's economic potential (Personal Interview, November 2022). However, high unemployment rates,

particularly among youth, make Somaliland vulnerable to instability. As underscored by Somaliland's Minister of Finance, Dr. Saad Ali Shire,

You can attract foreign direct investment and create employment and prosperity for the people and the majority of the people are doing well, then you would have less conflict, less problems. But the high unemployment rate, particularly young people, that's when you expose yourself to all sorts of instability and risk. (Personal Interview, November 2022).

Somaliland believes that attracting foreign investment and creating employment opportunities are critical for increasing prosperity and stability. The state is implementing policies to grow its free-market economy, creating economic free zones, and incentivizing investment by offering tax exemptions and land (Personal Interview, November 2022, December 2022). Additionally, Somaliland is streamlining regulations and investing in infrastructure to create a conducive business environment (Personal Interview, October 2022).

In evaluating Somaliland's recognition strategies, four key areas emerge: emphasizing their legal right to statehood, prioritize relationships with like-minded countries, earned statehood, and informal diplomacy. Somaliland's recognition strategy is evolving, and while there are promising signs of progress, they lack substantial engagement internationally.

For over 32 years, Somaliland has been focused on establishing its *legal right to statehood* as a key aspect of its broader strategy of recognition. The country has worked tirelessly to build bilateral relations and petition international and regional bodies for membership by emphasizing its legal claim to statehood. Diplomats from Somaliland stress their legal right, citing previous recognition as an independent state by several countries, including the US, before joining a union with Somalia in 1961 (Personal Interview, November 2022). They firmly maintain the belief in their "territorial integrity as absolutely sacrosanct," as per the Organization of African States (OAU) Charter, which upholds colonial boundaries (Personal

Interview, October 2022).³⁸ They also assert that denying them recognition goes against the UN resolution of self-determination and their right to life (Personal Interview, November 2022). Somaliland officials frequently reference their historical oppression as a remedial right to statehood. They cite Siad Barres regime's siege of the territory in the 1990s, resulting in the deaths of a quarter of a million people (Personal Interview, October, November, December 2022). According to Edna Adan, a prominent Somalilander activist and former Foreign Affairs Minister, the international community has taken the "victim" and "put it in prison, in incarceration for 32 years for a crime that we never committed" (Personal Interview, November 2022). They believe that their legal case for recognition is stronger than that of Eritrea, Kosovo, and South Sudan. Moreover, to alleviate global concerns over secession, they highlight the distinctiveness of their legal right to statehood and assert that their statehood will not trigger a chain of events that could lead to unforeseen consequences (Personal Interview, November 2022). Somaliland officials also argue that they represent a "motherland" rather than a breakaway region, and as such, they reject the suggestion that their recognition bid must be approved by other African states (Personal Interview, November 2022).

Despite Somaliland's persistent push for recognition, their efforts have generally been futile in advancing their cause internationally. Many officials acknowledge the importance of "realpolitik interests" as an obstacle to Somaliland's recognition (Personal Interview, November 2022). As such, they now believe that if Somaliland is to be recognized, it will likely be for its strategic location, as little has come from its democratization process over the last thirty years (Personal Interview December 2022). As a result, it seems that democratization has not been successful in garnering attention or support for Somaliland's cause. Nasir

³⁸ Prior to decolonization, Somaliland was administrated as a British Protectorate while the rest of Somalia was under Italian administration.

Ali, an advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Director of the Institute for Peace in Somaliland, highlights a significant challenge faced by Somaliland. While many foreign officials acknowledge the de facto statehood of Somaliland, their interest in the region is often short-lived. As he puts it, "They say that yes, we see you are qualified, you have a genuine case, but your case is not political" (Personal Interview, November 2022). Somaliland believes that this lack of sustained interest from foreign officials stems from their hesitance to complicate or worsen the ongoing conflict in Greater Somalia (Personal Interview, November 2022, December 2022). The international community has dedicated substantial efforts to resolving conflicts in Somalia, including addressing internal clan disputes and combating terrorism. Recognizing Somaliland's independence could potentially ignite further conflict, particularly because Mogadishu vehemently denies its statehood, which serves as a key factor behind the hesitance to actively support Somaliland's cause.

In recent years, Somaliland has taken a more pragmatic approach to its foreign policy, recognizing the need to adapt to the harsh realities of the international system. One of its key strategies is to *prioritize relationships with like-minded countries* that share its values of democracy and a free-market economy. To this end, Somaliland has explicitly stated its desire to avoid falling into the "Chinese trap" and has no interest in cultivating relations with China or Russia (Personal Interviews, October 2022, December 2022). Instead, the country is looking to engage with the West, which it sees as a strong starting point for building relationships with democratic nations that share its values. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Essa Kayd, emphasized, "We engage with people who are democratic, who share the same values that we have, who feel that they can do business with us" (Personal Interview, October 2022).

Somaliland is acutely aware of the strategic importance of its location and has made significant efforts to highlight this to the West to generate interest in its bid for recognition. Given the intensifying

competition for power in Africa, particularly in the Horn, Somaliland's location is of significant importance (Personal Interview, November 2022). Somaliland officials believe that the emergence of Chinese influence in the region has also impacted US foreign policy towards the Horn of Africa, as American officials perceive growing threats from Russia, Iran, and China and are more willing to engage with them (Personal Interview, October 2022, November 2022). Somaliland officials believe that their location near the Gulf of Aden is highly advantageous for the US and EU countries. By engaging with Somaliland, they argue that these countries can better protect their interests and ensure safe passage through the region. With 850 kilometers of coastline that borders the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, the world's busiest waterway through which two-thirds of the world's trade passes, Somaliland is a crucial maritime gateway. Moreover, Somaliland's coastline is relatively free of piracy, making it an attractive option for foreign partnerships.

Somaliland also *emphasizes its earned statehood* as a strategy of recognition. They stress their empirical characteristics of a state such as possessing a currency, democratic systems, airports, military, clear borders, and a population. Somaliland officials highlight that they possess all the "trappings of statehood," which are vital to gain recognition from international organizations such as the UN, the Arab League, and the African Union (Personal Interview, October 2022). They argue that their contributions to peace, security, democratization, and regional issues make them a "force for good" in their region (Personal Interview, February 2023). By engaging with Somaliland, states can help promote peace, stability, and economic development in a region that has been plagued by conflict and instability. Somaliland sees itself as an example of a successful democratic state, offering a ground-up alternative to many African states that view democracy as an "imposed paradigm" (Personal Interview, November 2022). Recognition by the international community can help maintain this example. Additionally, Somaliland maintains a democratic, free-market economy with strong borders and vigilant security and has not experienced a terrorist attack

since 2008. In contrast, many of its neighbours, such as Somalia, are plagued by violence, terrorism, and are heavily influenced by China and Russia (Personal Interview, October 2022). Somaliland believes that it can offer a counterbalance to these illiberal influences in the region (Personal Interview, November 2022). They note that there are many competing forces and proxy wars in the region, and that they require a strong friend to mitigate these conflicts. Somaliland also needs access to the international community to advance its security, such as the ability to share information with bodies like Interpol. By partnering with them, and their “exemplary case of statehood,” they argue that they can offer a way forward that prioritizes peace, stability, and economic development in the region (Personal Interview, October 2022).

Somaliland has also leveraged *informal diplomacy* as a crucial strategy towards its recognition bid. Somaliland's informal diplomacy strategy has been successful in fostering relationships with other African states and the West. Somaliland has been proactive in fostering relationships with individual African states and has secured informal "side meetings" with foreign ministers during general AU meetings in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Personal Interview, December 2022). These efforts have yielded promising results, with many African states, such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Rwanda, expressing an interest in recognizing Somaliland. However, they have expressed reservations about being the first country to do so, fearing the potential fallout of accepting the disintegration of a larger state (Personal Interview, October 2022). In Africa, colonial boundaries are considered almost sacrosanct and as such there is a significant hesitancy to be viewed as the country that breaks this norm.³⁹ Several Arab and African states informally engage with

³⁹ While recognition might be perceived as the breaking of this norm, Somaliland actually was a distinct colonial unit from Somalia.

Somaliland, though its strongest relations in these regions remain with Ethiopia and the UAE (Personal Interview, November 2022).

Somaliland has also relied on informal diplomacy to engage with the West, using offices in Canada, Norway, Sweden, and the US to promote its recognition bid. The UK maintains informal relations with Somaliland, investing in infrastructure and supporting elections, but maintains that any new arrangement between Somalia and Somaliland would need to be recognized first by the AU (Personal Interview, November 2022). Somaliland's strategy of engaging with the US through informal diplomacy has also been somewhat successful, with the Congress formally committing to helping Somaliland with security, defense, and economic prosperity in 2022 (Congress, 2022). As MFA Dr. Essa Kayd notes about their limited relations with the US,

Although they officially say we follow the One Somalia politics, it did not stop them from actually coming to our country and having regular visits and also being interested in having a military base in Berbera. So, yes, it [informality] is something that works. (Personal Interview, October 2022)

Despite limited involvement from the West, Somaliland is hopeful that its successful strategy of engagement through informal diplomacy will continue to build relationships and ultimately lead to formal recognition. Informal relations allow Somaliland to engage with other states without formally recognizing their status. As one official noted, "When you are supporting Somaliland, it doesn't mean that you are recognizing Somaliland, they want to engage with us, and we are happy to engage with them in the absence of recognition" (Personal Interview, January 2023). Despite not advancing its recognition efforts, this arrangement seems beneficial for Somaliland. While informal relations are not a substitute for formal recognition, they serve as a crucial step toward achieving this goal.

Somaliland has developed a comprehensive set of strategies to ensure its survival and stability in the face of international isolation. Since its inception, the country has relied on its own resources,

prioritizing security, democratization and human rights, self-reliance, and economic diversification and foreign investment. Despite its isolation from the international community, Somaliland has invested significantly in its security apparatus, creating specialized forces, and actively combating terrorism and piracy. The country has also pursued a unique hybrid-traditional democratic system, focusing on reducing clannism and regionalism. Self-reliance has been a key aspect of Somaliland's strategies, protecting its largest industry, mobilizing resources during crises, and emphasizing the importance of economic diversification. However, despite these efforts, Somaliland's recognition bid has faced significant challenges, with limited engagement internationally and foreign investment. The country has emphasized its legal right to statehood, highlighted its earned statehood through tangible characteristics of a state, prioritized relationships with like-minded countries, and utilized informal diplomacy. Overall, Somaliland recognizes the importance of adapting to the harsh realities of the international system and its strategies reflect its determination to survive and thrive despite its international isolation.

4.5.2 Kosovo's Strategies

While Kosovo and Somaliland share the goals of securing recognition and ensuring their survival as independent states, they differ slightly in their approaches. Kosovo has partial recognition and adopts a foreign policy focusing on strategic partnerships with the international community. Its statebuilding and recognition strategies revolve around engaging with external actors and seeking support from allies. As a result, Kosovo's strategies for recognition and survival are closely intertwined. External support and partnerships are vital in Kosovo's statebuilding efforts and goals for greater recognition. Kosovo focuses on three key policy areas to ensure survival: security, socioeconomic development, and strengthening internal governance and legitimacy structures.

Kosovo *prioritizes security* as a critical aspect of its survival strategies. The country heavily relies on international partners, especially the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to ensure its security (Personal Interview, February 2023). The US has played a significant role in Kosovo's security sector since its independence, including training its armed forces and establishing one of its largest bases in Europe in Kosovo (Personal Interview, February 2023). Kosovo is actively seeking to join NATO's *Partnership for Peace* program to further enhance its security and views NATO as a crucial security partner, particularly in case of a potential invasion by Serbia (Personal Interview, February 2023). While Kosovo maintains control over all its territory, it continues to collaborate with the international community to address ongoing security issues in North Mitrovica, which has deep ties to Belgrade (Personal Interview, February 2023).

Socioeconomic development is another key aspect of Kosovo's survival strategy. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Albin Kurti, Kosovo's government is investing in jobs and justice, prioritizing its socioeconomic development over solely focusing on foreign policy (Personal Interview, February 2023). As one Ambassador pointed out, reforms aimed at socioeconomic development are more effective in promoting stability than seeking recognition from "distant countries" (Personal Interview, January 2023). This strategy is meant to build the foundations for long-term stability, reduce reliance on external support, and foster economic growth (Personal Interview, February 2023). By investing in its own socioeconomic development, Kosovo seeks to enhance its chances of survival as an independent state and increase its populations standard of living.

Kosovo also *strengthens its internal governance and legitimacy structures* as a key strategy of survival. As the youngest country in Europe, Kosovo takes pride in having the most competitive elections in the region and considers itself an example of quality governance “built from scratch” with the help of

the international community (Personal Interview, January 2023). This is particularly significant given the region's authoritarian tendencies and geopolitical context. Kosovo also actively protects its minority groups to ensure social cohesion and stability. Despite Albanians comprising around 90% of the population, the government provides extensive rights to the Serbian minority, which represents approximately 5% of the population. These rights include the use of Serbian as an official language, reserved seats in parliament, the right to veto constitutional matters, and employment quotas (Personal Interview, February 2023). The government similarly protects the rights of other minority groups, including the Roma and Turkish populations. By safeguarding human rights and promoting a vibrant democracy, Kosovo is seeking to build a solid foundation for sustainable development and stability. As Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Liza Gashi notes, the government is actively trying to advance the minority rights within their state:

Since independence, Kosovars dedicated this effort not just on strengthening the rule of law, democracy, and human rights, but really it has played a big effort into the state building aspect of ensuring that all minorities and all non-majority communities all feel not just welcome, but it's also that they belong to this multiethnic state. (Personal Interview, November 2022)

Despite Kosovo's efforts to protect minority rights, instability persists in four municipalities in the North where Belgrade exerts direct influence over regional politics (Personal Interview, February 2023). This has hindered democratic processes and progress in the region. Developments in minority rights and accommodation are inextricably linked to the dialogue with Serbia, and officials in Kosovo believe that an agreement with Serbia is necessary before integrating locals fully. Nevertheless, protecting minority rights remains a critical issue for Kosovo in terms of upholding the rule of law and ensuring security. As such, it is an area of strategic concern for Kosovo's leadership, who are working to address it.

In evaluating Kosovo's recognition strategies, five key areas emerge: emphasizing their legal right to statehood, strategic partnership with regional organizations, alignment with like-minded countries, emphasizing their earned statehood, and informal diplomacy.

Kosovo emphasizes its *legal right to statehood* as a strategy of recognition. In discussions of its statehood, they often reference the International Court of Justice (ICJ) 2010 opinion that states that their declaration of independence does not violate international law. They believe that the ICJ's ruling provides them with a "unequivocal legal status as a sovereign state" (Personal Interview, February 2023). In addition, Kosovo's efforts to gain international recognition are deeply rooted in its tumultuous past, which they believe offers a remedial right for independence. The country suffered greatly under Serbian rule in the 1990s, and the subsequent war, with Kosovar Albanians subjected to mass killings and other grave human rights abuses (Personal Interview, February 2023). Today, the scars of that period still linger, with many individuals and families still grappling with the trauma and loss they experienced (Personal Interview, December 2022). Kosovo's emphasis on this history is not just a way to bolster its claim to recognition but also an effort to demonstrate its uniqueness. Officials in Kosovo try to distance themselves from other separatist cases by drawing on their wartime experiences. As noted by an official in the office of the Prime Minister, their international recognition should not result in a domino effect:

Some countries link Kosovo's status to their own relations with majority of the minorities, for instance, the Spaniards. There's an argument saying that if they recognize Kosovo, Catalonia would secede. But Catalonia is not the same. Catalans are living normally within Spain, and the Spanish majority is not fighting a war against the Catalans, which was the case in Kosovo in 1999. (Personal Interview, November 2022)

By differentiating itself from other cases and seeking support for recognition as a legal right, Kosovo sees itself as a "triumph of human rights over the violation of human rights" (Personal Interview, November 2022).

Kosovo's *strategic partnership with regional organizations*, particularly the European Union (EU), is another crucial aspect of its recognition strategy. The EU has a significant presence in Kosovo, with an extremely active office in the country, and plays a leading role in the negotiations with Serbia (Personal Interview, February 2023). Membership in international organizations is a priority for Kosovo, for security, socioeconomic development, and international integration. The country is already a member of the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Customs Union and has actively sought to join other European regional organizations, such as the Council of Europe. Kosovo believes that joining these organizations can also increase its legitimacy in various ways, primarily by providing a platform to participate in regional affairs and granting the country greater collective recognition (Personal Interview, February 2023). Kosovo has taken numerous steps towards EU accession and is committed to fulfilling the necessary requirements for membership. The country also sees membership in organizations like FIFA and the Olympics as an opportunity to raise awareness of its cause and promote its interests in the international system. Despite their seemingly insignificant nature, officials feel that these organizations have played a vital role in advancing Kosovo's cause (Personal Interview, November 2022). For Kosovo, integration into these international groups is considered a much higher priority than bilateral recognition offering a sort of "long way through the back door to the international recognition" (Personal Interview, January 2023).

Strategic alignment with like-minded countries is also another strategy of recognition. The country's strong support for Western policies and efforts to align its position with them have been crucial in securing external recognition. The US has been a key ally in this regard, actively supporting Kosovo's international recognition, and, as a result, Kosovo has received recognition from numerous countries with which it has never engaged (Personal Interview, February 2023). According to a senior official in the office of the Prime Minister, Kosovo's recognition was "a concerted effort from most of the Western governments... in a way,

it was a sponsored act" (Personal Interview, November 2022). Such alignment has also facilitated Kosovo's membership in international organizations, with Western countries advocating for Kosovo's participation. Germany, in particular, has played a significant role in supporting Kosovo's application to the EU (Personal Interview, January 2023). Notably, most of Kosovo's bilateral recognitions have come from democratic countries or those aligned with the West. As the Chair of the Foreign Affairs and Diaspora Parliamentary Committee, Mr. Haki Abazi, pointed out, most of their recognitions comes from the Western bloc; he stated: "If you're opposing that [Kosovo's recognition], you absolutely belong to the other bloc of autocratic, non-democratic or illiberal democracies" (Personal Interview, December 2022).

Kosovo places a high priority on membership in Western multilateral institutions, including the EU, the Council of Europe, and NATO, as part of its broader recognition strategy of alignment with the West. Kosovo's leaders understand that membership in these institutions provides significant benefits, including greater security, political and economic support, and external recognition (Personal Interview, December 2023). As noted by a consul in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "For Kosovo, it is way more important to have the recognition of five EU and NATO members than maybe the recognition of all other countries combined" (Personal Interview, December 2022). Kosovo's focus on integration into these institutions reflects its desire to align itself with Western values, promote long-term stability and security, and ensure its place in the international community. By meeting the high standards required for membership in these institutions, Kosovo is working to position itself as a reliable Western ally in the Western Balkans (Personal Interview, February 2023).

Another strategy of Kosovo is to *emphasize its earned statehood*. The country strategically markets itself as a stabilizing force in the region, which they feel is marked by authoritarian tendencies and a reversion to "ethnic premises" (Personal Interview, February 2023). Kosovo's government believes that its

adherence to the international rules-based system warrants greater international integration, and unanimous recognition is essential to meeting these standards (Personal Interview, December 2023). Russia's alleged influence in stoking tensions in the Western Balkans through the Kosovo issue is a significant concern for Kosovo, making international recognition a crucial tool in countering this influence (Personal Interview, February 2023). By establishing itself as a model for democratic governance and stability, Kosovo is positioning itself as a regional leader and an advocate for the global rules-based system. As such, they believe that this role should earn them greater international integration (Personal Interview, December 2023).

Finally, Kosovo, has relied on *informal diplomacy* as a key strategy to gain greater recognition internationally. Kosovo's foreign policy is guided by targeted relations aimed at normalizing relations with non-recognizing countries in the EU (Personal Interview, February 2023). Kosovo aims to strengthen bilateral relations with countries that already recognize them and to informally “soften” relationships with countries that do not (Personal Interview, January 2023). To achieve this goal, Kosovo has opened a representative office in Greece and sought to improve working relations with countries such as Slovakia, Romania, and Spain. These efforts have been successful in Greece, where Kosovo has upgraded the status of their office, which now functions as an embassy in Athens. With their budding friendship, they are engaging with several ministries and actively signing agreements (Personal Interview, January 2023). Rather than trying to pressure countries into recognizing Kosovo, Kosovo is content with normalizing relations in this way (Personal Interview, February 2023). As noted by Kreshnik Ahmeti, Deputy MFA, it is their hope that this informal normalization would "make it easier for them whenever they find it suitable to recognize us formally" (Personal Interview, November 2022). Kosovo believes that these informal

channels are essential for achieving greater recognition and that substantial informal relations are better than no relations at all (Personal Interview, November 2022).

Kosovo employs a multifaceted approach to secure recognition and ensure its survival as an independent state. Its strategies revolve around strategic partnerships with the international community, emphasizing security, socioeconomic development, and strengthening internal governance and legitimacy structures. Kosovo relies heavily on international support for its security, predominately partnering with the US and NATO. Socioeconomic development is prioritized to foster long-term stability and reduce dependence on external assistance. Internal governance and protection of minority rights are central to Kosovo's strategy, aiming to build a solid foundation for sustainable development. To attain recognition, Kosovo emphasizes its legal right to statehood, aligns with like-minded countries, seeks integration into regional organizations, underscores its earned statehood, and employs informal diplomacy. By differentiating itself from other cases, promoting alignment with Western values, pursuing membership in multilateral institutions, and engaging in informal channels, Kosovo aims to gain greater international recognition.

Kosovo and Somaliland share the common goals of securing recognition and ensuring their survival as independent states. However, they differ in their approaches to achieving these objectives. Kosovo, with partial recognition, focuses on strategic partnerships with the international community, prioritizing security, socioeconomic development, and strengthening internal governance. It heavily relies on external support, particularly from the US, the EU and NATO, and actively seeks membership in these international organizations. Somaliland, on the other hand, has achieved de facto independence but lacks international recognition. It adopts a more self-reliant approach, emphasizing stability, democratization, and socioeconomic progress within its borders. Somaliland has made significant strides in establishing

functional governance structures, maintaining security, and attracting investment. Both Kosovo and Somaliland face challenges in their pursuit of recognition, but their strategies reflect the specific geopolitical contexts and historical experiences of each region. Kosovo's emphasis on strategic partnerships and external support is influenced by its geographical proximity to European institutions and its conflict with Serbia. In contrast, Somaliland prioritizes internal stability and economic development to showcase self-sufficiency and demonstrate its capacity for autonomous governance. As aforementioned, Somaliland also lacks the involvement of a strong parent state, given the limited capacity of Somalia. Despite their divergent approaches, both entities remain driven by the shared objectives of achieving international recognition and ensuring their survival.

4.6 Challenges of Survival and Recognition

4.6.1 Somaliland Challenges

Although Somaliland possesses many of the empirical characteristics of a sovereign state, and adheres to international norms, Somaliland faces significant challenges in simultaneously pursuing recognition and ensuring its survival. Despite their efforts to advocate their legal case to the international community and regional bodies, their recognition remains elusive. Although their informal diplomacy efforts have helped strengthen some relationships, many states are hesitant to recognize Somaliland due to the perceived risks involved. These perceived risks include infringing upon the territorial sovereignty of a state and the potential fallout from Somalia and its allies. While some have expressed a willingness to recognize them second, the lack of interest in Somaliland has led to considerable suffering for its citizens. In the following section, I address three critical challenges that Somaliland faces as it strives to balance its goals of recognition and survival. Two of these challenges - the circular issue of development and exploitative engagements - are closely intertwined. In order to develop, Somaliland is compelled to enter into unequal

partnerships with foreign governments and corporations, which in turn can work to solidify Somaliland's subordinate status internationally. Additionally, Somaliland must navigate the competing demands of engaging in dialogue with its parent state, as desired by the international community, while also maintaining the trust of its own citizens. This represents a third challenge. These three dilemmas help illustrate complexities of navigating the harsh conditions of the international system for de facto states.

Somaliland's lack of development and reduced capacity to engage with other states results in less recognition and fewer external supporters, creating a *circular issue*. This, in turn, creates a challenge for the state as it struggles to independently address critical issues such as infrastructure development, which is essential for attracting trade and business. The lack of recognition and support has also led to limited access to international resources, making it difficult for the average Somalilander to participate in the international economy (Personal Interview, November 2022). This consistent formal isolation has impeded the growth of Somaliland's economy and private sector, further hindering external engagement. Due to limited budget and capacity, resources allocated to strengthen health, human rights, and education sectors have been insufficient, leading to some of the highest maternal mortality rates and the spread of rampant preventable diseases (Personal Interview, November 2022). These issues can also adversely affect Somaliland's international reputation, making it difficult to promote an earned statehood policy to increase international engagement.

Somaliland's neighbour states in the Horn of Africa are also experiencing issues of development, but they have an advantage due to having access to bilateral aid and a broad network of international organizations that invest in them. In contrast, Somaliland's lack of representation in international spaces is a significant obstacle that hinders its progress. Without a voice in international relations and limited investments, Somaliland faces significant barriers to achieving its development goals. For instance,

Somaliland had historically had a dual-track relationship with the UN. However, five years ago, the government in Mogadishu demanded that this policy be revoked, citing infringement of their sovereignty. As a result, the UN obliged, and now, the government in Mogadishu, which has a strained relationship with Somaliland, is tasked with distributing most of the funds and goods of the UN to Hargeisa (Personal Interview, October 2022). Unfortunately, Somaliland often does not receive this aid, as seen during the pandemic when Somalia withheld vaccinations meant for Somaliland until they were three days from expiration, making it difficult for the government to administer them effectively (Personal Interview, October 2022). This lack of representation internationally creates significant problems for Somaliland, such as the politicization of humanitarian aid, making it challenging for the state to progress.

Despite significant advances, being stuck in limbo in the international system for decades has negatively impacted Somaliland. There is a growing acknowledgement by officials in Somaliland that despite its success, to progress further, Somaliland needs international partners. To achieve this, officials in Somaliland are willing to make trade-offs, choosing greater recognition and international integration at the cost of current statebuilding goals for the aim of future sustainability. Their circular issues, generated from low development and a lack of recognition, have made officials more willing to open up to the international community, even in potentially harmful ways. Somaliland is moving beyond merely advocating for its legal case, which stresses adherence to statehood through the liberal rules-based order. Instead, it is taking a more political approach to advance its cause, which may come with certain costs. By doing so, Somaliland is exposing itself to the possibility of *foreign exploitation and investment*, which can present challenges and trade-offs for the state moving forward.

Somaliland is strategically working to engage with the West, placing significant value on developing relations with the Pentagon. Somaliland is desperate for a friend to protect its interests in the

Horn of Africa, fearing that it may become a part of proxy wars in the future. Despite the potential benefits of generating political interest in their cause and engaging with Great Powers like the US informally through the Pentagon, Somaliland may be opening itself up to an exploitative relationship. Allowing the US to establish a military base could be detrimental to its internal legitimacy. General citizens' perceptions of the US are wary, and there are concerns about the US being seen as an occupying force, which could fuel anti-American sentiment in the region (Personal Interview, December 2022). It could also lead to an escalation in Al-Shabaab activity in the state, which Somaliland has successfully evaded through its own efforts since 2008 (Personal Interview, November 2022). In a way, this enticing of the US to have a military base in their region is essentially Somaliland willingly giving up some of its already limited sovereignty. Furthermore, greater engagement with the US may serve to ostracize Somaliland from fellow Islamic countries. While Somaliland's efforts to engage with the West are understandable, officials must weigh the potential costs and benefits of such engagement carefully to ensure that it does not undermine their hard-won progress toward stability and security.

Apart from trying to develop relations with the West by becoming a geostrategic military location for the US, Somaliland is also seeking to attract foreign investment. While seeking foreign investment is not necessarily negative, Somaliland's approach raises some concerns. They have strategically attempted to make themselves more attractive to foreign businesses by removing taxes for the first ten years, exploring oil, opening up free economic zones, and building roads to facilitate trade (Personal Interview, November 2022). These efforts could boost their economy, develop their infrastructure, and increase their international integration. However, Somaliland's strategy of seeking foreign investment raises two problems. First, foreign investors can often engage in exploitative relationships when investing in underdeveloped regions of sub-Saharan Africa (Ndikumana and Verick 2008). Second, Somaliland's international status as a de

facto state with low development puts them at a disadvantage in negotiations, resulting in unfavourable deals. As noted by an official in the MFA, in their efforts to boost trade, they contend that they “have to downgrade our bargaining power” (Personal Interview, December 2022). They elaborate that in downgrading their bargaining power, they remind themselves that “even though you are behaving an independent state, do not go too far because it could also be damaging your external relations one way or another” (Personal Interview, December 2022).

The Berbera port deal between Somaliland and UAE's DP World is an illustrative example of the problems that foreign investment can create. The 2016 deal involved DP World investing \$40 million to build and run the port for ten years while monopolizing the lucrative trade routes that extend to the Gulf of Aden. However, many citizens of Somaliland and the opposition in power at the time were against the deal, voicing their discontent (Personal Interview, December 2022). They felt that the government had engaged in an unfavourable deal for two main reasons. First, Somalilanders and the opposition were not keen on having a foreign country occupy their main port for ten years, especially when their people felt so strongly about having a say in their own development (Personal Interview, December 2022). Second, many people thought Somaliland should have gotten a better deal, citing China's \$4 billion investment in Djibouti's ports as an example (Personal Interview, December 2022).⁴⁰ The opposition felt that the government had missed an opportunity to negotiate a better deal that would have benefited the people of Somaliland in the long run (Personal Interview, December 2022). The Berbera deal is a cautionary tale for Somaliland as it continues

⁴⁰ It should be noted, however, that this deal was over 20 years in Djibouti compared to 10 years in Berbera.

to seek foreign investment. Yet, the Berbera deal is not an isolated incident. According to one official, such unequal deals happen repeatedly:

These are the countries that have the upper hand, and they benefit more because Somaliland is not recognized, and they sometimes take advantage of that. What is needed is a mutual understanding, mutual interest, and mutual benefit. That is not the case in Somaliland with other countries. (Personal Interview, February 2023)

While such deals may be crucial for integrating Somaliland into the international system and boosting its economy, they can come at a cost, particularly to public trust and internal stability. Repeated instances of such deals risk further eroding the government's legitimacy and undermining its efforts to build a stable and prosperous state. Therefore, Somaliland needs to be cautious about entering into agreements that may compromise its sovereignty or leave it vulnerable to exploitation.

Somaliland also faces a trade-off between its internal legitimacy and its pursuit of greater international recognition, particularly in the context of *dialogue with its parent state*, Somalia. Despite the international community's insistence that Somaliland engages in dialogue with Somalia, officials and citizens in Somaliland have grown weary of such demands. They reject the notion of reunification with what they consider a completely inferior, failed state. As MFA Dr. Essa Kayd stated,

We went so far off 31 years without being recognized. And if it takes another hundred years, we're willing to do so without. We don't want to be united with Somalia... our biggest problem is that what many other countries would like us to do so. (Personal Interview, October 2022)

Somaliland officials feel that they face a stalemate in their international status due to the demands of the international community regarding Somalia (Personal Interview, October, December 2022). Meaningful dialogue with Somalia has proven difficult to achieve, particularly as Somalia has not agreed to a two-state solution. The instability of Somalia has further complicated matters, with drastic foreign policy changes over time hindering any progress made. Despite this, most officials and citizens of Somaliland oppose

continuing dialogue with their parent state (Personal Interview, November 2022). This has created tension between the demands of the international community and the preferences of Somaliland's citizens, leaving government officials to balance the two. While Somaliland officials had prioritized the interests of powerful states and the UN in the past in the hopes of gaining recognition, they now feel that talks with "their aggressor" are unjustifiable and instead prioritize domestic stability (Personal Interview, November 2022). Officials believe that engaging in dialogue with Somalia would cost too much in terms of public trust, despite the potential benefits for Somaliland's international legitimacy (Personal Interview, November 2022).

Somaliland faces significant challenges in its pursuit of recognition and survival as an independent state. Despite meeting the criteria of a sovereign state and adhering to international norms, Somaliland struggles to gain recognition from the international community. The circular issue of development and exploitative engagements is a critical challenge for Somaliland. Limited development and capacity hinder recognition and external support, while the lack of recognition hampers access to international resources and inhibits economic growth. Additionally, the absence of representation in international spaces, such as the UN, creates difficulties in accessing crucial resources and aid. Moreover, navigating the competing demands of engaging with Somalia, as desired by the international community, while maintaining the trust of its citizens poses a significant challenge. Despite international pressures, Somaliland officials and citizens remain hesitant about dialogue and prioritize domestic stability. Striking a balance between pursuing recognition and preserving internal stability is a complex dilemma. The pursuit of engagement with the West and foreign investment raises concerns about potential exploitation and compromises on sovereignty. Overall, these challenges illustrate the complexities of navigating the international system for de facto states like Somaliland.

4.6.2 Kosovo Challenges

Though they are likely caused by the same conditions, that is the neorealist logic that guides international relations, Kosovo's challenges are different than Somaliland's, given their level of international integration and engagement. Since 1998, the international community has been heavily involved in Kosovo, acting as the “champion” of Kosovo's statebuilding initiatives. Their level of engagement has been immensely beneficial for Kosovo, enabling them to gain many allies, foster strong relations with other states, and make significant progress in developing as a new country. Despite these benefits, the heavy involvement of foreign countries and international and regional bodies can also come at a cost. Kosovo has faced numerous challenges in balancing the demands of the international community with the democratic will of its people, which can manifest in various forms. These challenges include trade-offs between current sovereignty and the prospects of future stability, unfavorable accession demands presented by the EU, their international integration being tied to dialogue with Serbia, and the presence of geopolitics and vested interests. Balancing the need for international recognition and integration while maintaining their sovereignty and public trust is a delicate balancing act that Kosovo is consistently struggling to achieve. Although being cut off from the international community has its drawbacks, as seen in the case of Somaliland, Kosovo struggles to strike a balance that works for them with their higher levels of engagement.

Kosovo is confronted with a range of challenges, including the difficult trade-off between maintaining its *current sovereignty and the potential of future stability*. In order to gain recognition or greater security, Kosovo frequently makes concessions to the international community. Unfortunately, these concessions can lead to external interference that can often disrupt the country's domestic affairs. The US, in particular, plays a critical role in ensuring Kosovo's security, leading to a "joint project" between the two countries (Personal Interview, February 2023). As a result, the US wields significant influence over

Kosovo's military appointments and security, limiting the country's decision-making power. As one official notes:

Nothing happens in our military force without the approval of the US. So, when it comes to the appointments, of our generals, of our key positions within the military, privately, everything is discussed with the US Embassy beforehand. When we want to change any particular security related legislation, it must be first filtered and screened and scrutinized by the US. (Personal Interview, February 2023)

While these measures guarantee Kosovo's security, they also come at the expense of its sovereignty and limit its decision-making power.

Another example of the international community interfering with Kosovo's sovereignty is evident in the current government's efforts to introduce judicial reforms to combat corruption. These proposed measures garnered widespread support from the population due to the prevalent belief that many judges were corrupting the judicial system and were often taking bribes (Personal Interview, February 2023). The measures sought to ensure the integrity of judges and prosecutors, however, the EU intervened, expressing concerns about potential undue influence on the judicial system (Personal Interview, February 2023). The EU did this to prevent too intense of vetting of judges leading to “dysfunctional courts” as was the case with judicial changes in Albania (Isufi 2021). This ongoing issue underscores the cost of international involvement, as one official conveyed, such trade-offs often come at the expense of exercising sovereign statehood over the “democratic will of the people” (Personal Interview, January, February 2023).⁴¹ While Kosovo recognizes the need for international support and recognition, they also value their autonomy and

⁴¹ It is important to note that the EU enforces stringent anti-corruption policies for all states seeking membership. Contrary to some officials' perception in Kosovo, the EU's involvement may have been intended to strengthen and stabilize Kosovo's institutions, rather than undermine its sovereignty. However, it is crucial to recognize that the analysis provided primarily reflects the perspective of elites within de facto states.

decision-making power, making it challenging to balance these two priorities. As one high-ranking government official notes:

This happens on a daily basis. Where the international communities are regularly requesting something from Kosovo in order to move ahead in an international arena. And that is not always supported by a majority of the population, although they have high interest in issues such as visa and so on. But sometimes they feel like it is too much. And then government has to, yes, balance or prioritize the legitimacy, the support, the stability from their constituency and rather than exercise the governance power given to them. (Personal Interview, December 2022)

Kosovo also faces challenges in balancing its pursuit of recognition and survival with its *accession to the EU*. The journey to joining the EU has been arduous, marked by numerous obstacles. Despite slow progress that has left some citizens frustrated, many Kosovars still support the idea of EU membership (Personal Interview, December 2022). However, the Kosovo government has been forced to make difficult choices, as the EU demands certain concessions that many citizens feel are unjustifiable. This has resulted in a trade-off between international demands and internal legitimacy. As one official noted, "Kosovo has had to maneuver with legal argumentation, lobbying, and diplomatic efforts, which require three or four times the energy and intensity compared to a typical integration process" (Personal Interview, February 2023). As such, it is challenging for Kosovo to prioritize internal legitimacy when seeking integration into the EU (Personal Interview, February 2023).

Several of these challenges stem from EU officials promising visa liberalization to Kosovo in exchange for specific actions. Visa liberalization has been a crucial goal for Kosovo, among other things, as it provides greater freedom of movement for its sizable population of young people who often travel abroad and face significant visa restrictions. The EU initially required Kosovo to fulfill 96 criteria, which they did by 2018 (Personal Interview, January 2023). However, an additional condition was added, demanding Kosovo to demarcate its borders with Montenegro in 2016 in exchange for them granting visa

liberalization. This decision was divisive and resulted in public outcry and protests in Prishtina, as it required Kosovo to give up 8,000 hectares of land. Even though Kosovo conceded to this condition, the EU failed to deliver on its promise of visa liberalization.

Additionally, the EU imposed another condition for visa liberalization, requiring the establishment of a special court in The Hague to prosecute top government officials, including Kosovo's former Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, for war crimes.⁴² Despite Thaci's compliance with the EU's demand, the decision faced strong opposition from the formal opposition, civil society groups, and citizens of Kosovo (Personal Interview, December 2022). They believed that the EU was biased in only punishing Kosovo's war leaders while allowing Serbian officials who committed crimes against Kosovo to remain in power (Personal Interview, December 2022). Furthermore, they were upset that the EU would not allow Kosovo to address its own internal issues through the establishment of a post-war tribunal, feeling that since the crimes occurred in Kosovo, they should be dealt with internally (Personal Interview, January 2023).⁴³ Despite these concerns, the government ultimately followed the EU's demands, leading to a growing erosion of public trust and legitimacy in Kosovo. Many citizens have become increasingly resentful of the ongoing and seemingly fruitless process of integration and the resulting concessions they must make to the EU (Personal Interview, February 2023).

Another related challenge comes as a result of the international community's pressure and oversights of Kosovo's *dialogue with Serbia*. Initially, Kosovar officials were optimistic that the talks

⁴² These crimes included forced disappearances, torture and killing of Serb prisoners during the war.

⁴³ It is important to clarify that the EU's decision in this matter was likely motivated by a desire to maintain objectivity and fairness in the judicial process, rather than any deliberate intention to undermine Kosovo.

would help to normalize relations between the two countries and resolve practical issues related to trade, passports, license plates, and other matters. However, over time, the international community has closely tied Kosovo's recognition and integration into the global system to the status of the dialogue with Serbia. This now affects all levels of their international integration. Their tied international integration with Serbia is considered by Kosovars as even more problematic given that they believe there exists "no political will" from the Serbs to resolve the issue (Personal Interview, December 2022). As Mr. Haki Abazi notes, it is a "loaded gun" as it presents the "perfect platform for Serbia to challenge the very decision for independence and the very decision of support of the Western countries - it's a catch-22" (Personal Interview, December 2022). Officials in Kosovo believe that Serbia has misused the dialogue to buy time and consume Kosovo's power and energy due to its continued desire to absorb Kosovo into its territory. This has caused significant frustration in Kosovo and further erosion of public trust internally, and disappointment in the international community's handling of the situation.

Kosovar officials also feel that Kosovo is being treated more harshly than Serbia in the dialogue process, despite receiving formal recognition from many states, which should put them on equal footing with Serbia. As one government official notes, "There's a disappointment in the West in the sense that, indisputably Kosovo is the most liberal democracy in the region, and yet it faces sometimes the harshest pressure from our Western allies" (Personal Interview, February 2023). The EU and the US have been pushing for Kosovo to allow for the creation of the *Association of Serbian Municipalities*, which would grant the Serb minority who dominate four northern municipalities greater autonomy. However, the Kosovo constitutional court has ruled that this arrangement violates the country's constitution, and Kosovo's government and majority population oppose it, fearing that it could lead to the creation of ethnic

borders similar to Bosnia and Herzegovina's autonomous region of Republika Srpska (Personal Interviews, December 2022, January, February 2023). As one government official notes:

We hear the argument that, well, if you implement this, then you will become a fully-fledged recognized state. On that, we would rather prefer a non-recognized functional state than a dysfunctional, recognized state like the case with Bosnia. (Personal Interview, November 2022)

Most citizens in Kosovo share the same sentiment, with many taking to the streets to protest, sometimes violently, against this arrangement (Personal Interview, February 2023). Despite this opposition, the EU and the US had remained steadfast in their position, even threatening sanctions during informal talks with Kosovo when the current administration refused to budge on this issue (Personal Interview, February 2023). This has caused significant frustration in Kosovo and raised questions about the fairness of linking their international integration to the dialogue process. Given the considerable international pressure, it is likely that Kosovo will have to continue making concessions on this issue to move forward.

Kosovo is also deeply affected by the *geopolitics of the international system and vested interests*. Although the support of Western nations initially served them well, contemporary geopolitics has presented both opportunities and obstacles. Due to the multi-polarity of international relations, Kosovo has limited space to maneuver in increasing its legitimacy, feeling like a pawn in the larger conflict between the West and Russia (Personal Interview, January 2023). While Western support has been beneficial, it also invites counteractions from Serbia and Russia, both of whom see the Western Balkans as an area of historical influence (Personal Interview, November 2022). This has led to tensions in the region, with Kosovo's progress being both aided and hindered by the complex global dynamics at play. The US maintaining ties with Belgrade has resulted in pressure on Kosovo to make unfavourable concessions that are seen as coming at a cost to their interests. The US's "both sideism" in the dialogue with Serbia has been particularly problematic for Kosovo, as it limits their ability to negotiate for their interests (Personal Interview,

December 2022).⁴⁴ As one official notes, it is a "geopolitics and power play" that forces Kosovo to engage in dialogue with Serbia, ultimately delaying its development (Personal Interview, December 2022). The government feels that Kosovo has become a platform for great power politics, attracting several foreign interests in its bid for recognition. Officials in Kosovo believe that the US and the West have an interest in extending relations with Serbia, despite their clear alliance with Russia, which further complicates the situation. As one official notes,

We don't have any leverage, so we don't have any big countries backing us up. I mean, we have the US, of course, but the US wants to strike a balance because it's of course in the interest of us to keep Serbia close. When it comes to the US's involvement in the Balkans, it's an interest-based game for the US. (Personal Interview, January 2023)

The Serbian dialogue has been a contentious issue for Kosovo, but tensions and trade-offs have recently escalated with the re-election of Albin Kurti as Prime Minister in 2021. As a member of the Vetëvendosje Party (Self-Determination), Kurti has been a vocal opponent of making concessions to Serbia, as evidenced by Vetëvendosje's history of organizing protests against such concessions, including some of the largest protests in Kosovo since the end of the war in 1999. In fact, Kurti himself was arrested for protesting an EU deal that granted concessions to the Serbian population in 2015. With a historic 51% majority win, Kurti's election seems to reflect the population's growing frustration with the trade-offs and concessions they have had to make over the past decade. Kurti's government has prioritized job creation and promoting justice in an effort to balance international demands with the will of the people. This more indigenous political movement is not willing to agree to direct influence from outside forces, and the

⁴⁴ It is worth noting that the US' role in nurturing relations with both Serbia and Kosovo could be interpreted as an effort to promote peace and stability in the region, rather than solely driven by self-interest. Their involvement may reflect a broader commitment to regional security and conflict resolution.

government is sending a clear message to allies that it can make independent political decisions that will serve Kosovo's interests. As one official noted:

The current government is setting its foot down for the people, for Kosovo's interest, for the bargaining sort of dynamic, but also to send a clear message to our allies that we are a country that is able to do its own politics. We are not going to constantly follow behind whatever is being said at the detriment of our interests. And I think that people are on board. (Personal Interview, January 2023)

The election of Albin Kurti and his party's platform represents a significant shift in Kosovo's priorities, with the majority of the population now demanding more focus on domestic issues and less emphasis on the dialogue with Serbia. However, this objective has proven challenging for Kurti's administration, as the Serbian dialogue remains a dominant topic of discussion in the legislature in the last two years, despite his promises. It appears that even those who oppose international influences in Kosovo have realized that evading their demands is not a viable long-term strategy and that a balance must be struck. Despite these obstacles, Kurti's government seems to be committed to prioritizing domestic issues over the interests of the international community.

Kosovo's path of international integration and engagement presents a myriad of unique challenges. While the involvement of the international community has brought certain benefits, Kosovo grapples with the intricate task of reconciling global expectations with the democratic aspirations of its people. Partnering with the international community, particularly the West and the EU, has proven to be a double-edged sword. On one hand, these alliances have enhanced Kosovo's capacity and facilitated more formal engagements. However, the EU's track record of unfulfilled promises, coupled with increasingly onerous conditions for accession, has strained the relationship. This delicate situation forces Kosovo to make difficult trade-offs between sovereignty and stability, contend with unfavorable demands for EU integration, manage the intricate linkage between international integration and the Serbia dialogue, and navigate the influence of

geopolitics and vested interests. Struggling to strike a workable balance, Kosovo seeks to maintain international recognition and integration while safeguarding its sovereignty and preserving public trust. Frustration arises from the EU's conditional approach to visa liberalization and demands tied to the Serbia dialogue, raising what they view as legitimate concerns about fairness. Additionally, Kosovo finds itself caught amidst geopolitical dynamics and competing interests, often becoming a pawn in larger conflicts. The recent re-election of Prime Minister Albin Kurti reflects a growing sense of frustration and a desire to prioritize domestic issues over concessions to Serbia. Altogether, Kosovo grapples with the formidable task of finding a harmonious equilibrium that satisfies its pursuit of international recognition and integration while simultaneously safeguarding its sovereignty and preserving public trust.

4.7 Discussion

In the preceding sections, an evaluation was conducted on the survival and recognition strategies of de facto states, along with the challenges they encounter in reconciling these imperatives. Building on the international conditions discussed earlier, three expectations were formulated to guide the interviews with officials from Somaliland and Kosovo. The outcomes of these interviews largely affirmed the initial expectations, offering valuable insights into the strategies and challenges confronted by de facto states. The findings indicated that de facto states frequently prioritize strategies of recognition, potentially at the expense of survival considerations. Furthermore, the implications of this prioritization varied depending on the level of engagement exhibited by each de facto state. Somaliland, with low engagement, was observed to encounter more exploitative relationships and unequal agreements, while Kosovo, with higher engagement, faced a greater number of trade-offs. This section will delve into the supporting evidence in greater detail, shedding light on the dynamics at play.

I found significant evidence that supports the conclusions of the existing literature on the strategies used by de facto states. These strategies are summarized in **Table 7**. Somaliland and Kosovo pursue many of the same strategies of survival and recognition that were highlighted in the literature. Both states prioritize their security apparatuses, socioeconomic development, and internal governance structures to ensure their survival. In terms of recognition, both heavily rely on informal diplomacy channels, substantiating claims made in the *engagement without recognition* literature. Informal diplomacy offered a space for Kosovo and Somaliland to have “an enormously high degree of latitude” in engagements despite their formal status (Ker Lindsay 2015 p.284). Both states also made their legal case for statehood, with Somaliland highlighting its territorial integrity, colonial boundaries, and history of subjugation while Kosovo emphasizes the ICJ opinion and their remedial right to statehood. Somaliland and Kosovo also both stressed how they have earned their statehood by representing a force for good in their regions, highlighting the importance of their state for regional peace, stability, and liberal values. These strategies echoes many of the arguments brought forth in the literature on recognition and survival as highlighted in **Table 6**.

The case studies presented here also contribute to the advancement of scholarship by presenting unique strategies that have been overlooked in the existing literature. For instance, for emphasizing their legal right to statehood, both states strategically work to differentiate themselves from other separatist entities by highlighting the uniqueness of their case. In addition, while prior research has emphasized the importance of support from a Great Power, such as the US or Russia, the case studies reveal that de facto states can strategically align with a bloc of states, such as the West, to attain their goals. Both Somaliland and Kosovo actively and strategically align with the West and have conveyed their opposition to other non-Western influence in their regions.

The case studies also reveal novel findings given their variation in level of international engagement. Despite similarities in their goals, the cases highlight key differences in their approaches to survival due to variations in their level of international engagement. As summarized in **Table 7**, Somaliland prioritizes self-resiliency while Kosovo does not. Somaliland's self-reliance is reflected in its protection of its livestock, its democratic system and state institutions, which were conceived independently. In contrast, Kosovo acknowledges that its statehood was made possible through international support, resulting in its democratic, multiethnic state.

Table 7: Strategies of Recognition and Survival

Strategy	Somaliland	Kosovo
Security	x	x
Earned Statehood	*	*
Self-Reliance	x	
Socioeconomic Development	x	x
Foreign Investment	*	*
Legal Right to Statehood	+	+
Lobbying Regional Bodies	*	*
Lobbying International Bodies	*	*
Informal Diplomacy	+	+
Geostrategic Location	*	
Alignment with Like-Minded Countries	*	*
Informal Diplomacy	+	+
Emphasis on Minority Rights		*

x – Represents a statebuilding goal.

+ - Represents a recognition goal.

***** - Represents a strategy that helps achieve both goals.

This difference is also apparent in their security arrangements, as Somaliland has independently secured its territory, while Kosovo works in close partnership with the US and NATO. In addition, given their

demographics, as a largely homogenous population, Somaliland does not have to strategically pursue minority rights as Kosovo does. Furthermore, as a result of their international status being tied to the dialogue with Belgrade, Kosovo pursues the advancement of minority rights for both the goal of bolstering internal legitimacy and enhancing their international integration.

Somaliland and Kosovo's strategies for achieving recognition also reveal subtle differences, which are shaped by their level of engagement with the international community. Somaliland, lacking formal recognition, places significant emphasis on convincing states and international bodies of its legitimacy as a sovereign state. Its efforts are focused on highlighting its strong legal case and geostrategic location, and it prioritizes establishing bilateral relationships with any willing parties, particularly Western countries. In contrast, Kosovo has already been recognized by several powerful states and is less preoccupied with proving its statehood. Instead, it seeks to enhance its integration through regional and international organizations and strategically targets diplomatic efforts at EU non-recognizers. Kosovo's approach differs from Somaliland's as it is less focused on acquiring what it refers to as the "low-hanging fruit" in international diplomacy (Personal Interview, November 2022). These nuanced approaches shed light on the complex strategies employed by de facto states to achieve recognition and emphasize the importance of considering their level of engagement with the international community.

The case studies of Somaliland and Kosovo also shed light on the delicate balancing act that these de facto states attempt in achieving both survival and recognition. First, the two goals can complement each other, as demonstrated by the intersection of the survival and recognition strategies in **Table 7**. Both states recognize that democratization and the protection of human rights are crucial to attaining both goals, increasing internal legitimacy and reinforcing the importance of earned statehood for recognition. Another illustration of this intersection is the strategic alignment of these de facto states with the West, creating

strong ties and important allies based on shared values. Such partnerships can offer international support for recognition and aid their domestic development. Foreign investment is also crucial for both Kosovo and Somaliland to increase external relations and integration, and investment in their state, which can accelerate development. Moreover, Kosovo's ascension to the EU can significantly advance its socioeconomic development and international standing, while Somaliland's marketing of itself as a geostrategic location can attract investment to its economy and increase its international integration.

Additionally, this study advances how Somaliland and Kosovo face complex challenges in their pursuit of recognition and survival. Both states face challenges in dealing with a subordinate status internationally which results in a lack of leverage at the bargaining table, significant concessions, and exploitative relations. Both Somaliland and Kosovo also face the challenge of the international community insisting on them having a dialogue with their parent state in exchange for greater international integration. While the impact of these harsh international conditions is contingent on the level of engagement of the de facto states, regardless of a de facto state's level of international engagement, they are likely to face complex challenges in pursuing their goals if they lack a unanimous sovereign status. As a result, I identify how they have common and unique challenges given their level of international engagement as summarized in **Table 8**. Low engagement leads to circular issues of development and stagnation, while high engagement can result in more complex trade-offs involving regional bodies, the vested interest of foreign powers and geopolitics. For Somaliland to gain recognition, they need to invest in their foreign policy, but with low development and investment, they have limited funds to progress internally. This creates a vicious cycle of low investments and low engagement which results in them opening themselves up to exploitative relations. Kosovo's high level of international engagement has brought its own set of challenges. While they do not face the circular issues of low development and low recognition, greater international engagement by the

international community results in increased demands and vested interests. This creates a trade-off between adhering to international demands for the prospect of greater integration and prioritizing public trust and governance initiatives.

Table 8: Challenges of De Facto States

Challenge	Somaliland	Kosovo
Circular Development	x	
Exploitative Engagements	x	x
Dialogue with Parent State	x	x
Limited Sovereignty		x
Accession to Regional and International bodies		x
Vested Interests		x

This work also demonstrates how, due to the systemic conditions of the international system, Somaliland and Kosovo prioritize strategies of international recognition over contemporary efforts of survival, with the belief that this decision will lead to the future survival and stability of their state. The unfavourable conditions of the international system force these states to make difficult decisions about how to prioritize their survival and recognition. Although de facto states often prioritize strategies that aim to garner greater recognition, every interviewee in this study ranked survival as the most critical factor. Officials emphasized that improving domestic affairs politically, socially, and economically, as well as the infrastructure, was paramount for their survival. As one interviewee aptly put it, "Without a state, what are we?" (Personal Interview, October 2022). Despite their insistence on choosing survival over recognition, Somaliland and Kosovo have implicitly favoured greater recognition and integration over contemporary statebuilding initiatives. Given the harsh realities of the international system, de facto states' pursuit of recognition is, in fact, a long-term bargain for future survival. These states are making calculated decisions

about recognition strategies despite potential costs to public trust and internal legitimacy, hoping to secure their future survival.

The biggest issue facing Somaliland is its isolation, which has resulted in a lack of development and limited access to international opportunities. Somaliland recognizes the need to address this challenge and has begun pursuing a more politically focused approach to gain recognition. However, this strategy also exposes Somaliland to the possibility of entering exploitative relationships with other countries or entities. In their pursuit of political recognition, they run the risk of becoming entangled in power dynamics and vested interests, potentially further delaying their integration into the international system. A similar situation can be observed in the case of Kosovo, where geopolitical considerations have played a significant role. Somaliland believes that its best chance at achieving recognition lies in becoming a geopolitical interest to influential countries. They view establishing a military base with the US as a means to gain a strong ally who can advocate for their cause on the international stage. While this move may carry costs in terms of public trust, it offers the potential for increased security and support, which could contribute to their future integration into the international community. Due to the complex international conditions surrounding their status, Somaliland has felt compelled to engage in biased deals and carefully navigate their international engagements. They have willingly subjected themselves to a lesser status than that of other recognized states, all in the hopes of securing future security and greater international integration.

Similarly, Kosovo's officials have consistently prioritized recognition over the survival of their state, leading to a series of concessions that have limited the country's sovereignty. These concessions include accepting limitations on their security imposed by the US, agreeing to territorial adjustments in border demarcation with Montenegro, extraditing their former Prime Minister, and granting greater autonomy to the Serb minority in the northern part of the country, among other compromises. While the

Kurti government has shown some resistance to accepting further concessions, the overall approach of Kosovo's government has been to make significant compromises in pursuit of integration and recognition. However, these concessions have come at the cost of public trust and sovereignty. While the citizens of Kosovo are eager for greater integration into the international community, their patience is wearing thin as they see little tangible rewards for the sacrifices they have made. The Kosovo government continues to make concessions to the international community, particularly the EU, hoping that it will secure their permanent status as a sovereign state and improve their standard of living. Nevertheless, this relentless pursuit has left them with limited leverage at the bargaining table, raising concerns that they may eventually be unable to make any further concessions.

Both Somaliland and Kosovo are confronted with complex challenges as they seek recognition and integration into the international system. They face the dilemma of making concessions and engaging in politically driven strategies, which may impact public trust and sovereignty. Despite the potential drawbacks, they continue to navigate these intricate dynamics in the hope of securing a stronger position and irreversible recognition as sovereign states.

While the officials in Kosovo and Somaliland have come to terms with their status as "second-class citizens" on the international stage, they remain weary of the international community's "hypocrisy" and the detrimental effects it has on their citizens. They are keenly aware of the political nature of recognition and the prevailing international conditions, which prioritizes politics over merit. When asked about the challenges arising from the EU's demands on Kosovo, several officials noted that their public administration would have been much more motivated to deliver on reforms if they had a clear and merit-based EU integration process (Personal Interview, December 2022). Both Kosovo and Somaliland believe that the international community and the liberal rules-based order, by extension, are betraying the very

values they were built upon by withholding their recognition and international integration.⁴⁵ As Kreshnik Ahmeti, Deputy MFA, pointed out regarding Kosovo's delays in joining IOs, "I don't expect fairness, but it's not even good for the organizations themselves. It's not a good message. Their [political interest] should be separated, rather it should be meritocracy, you know" (Personal Interview, November 2022). Somaliland officials shared similar sentiments to this. In reflecting on the "hypocrisy" of Somaliland's recognition being withheld while Somalia is "spoon-fed" by the international community, former MFA Edna Adan notes:

It is insult and injury to democracy. Change the name. Give value to anarchy, if you wish, because that's what the world is doing is it's recognizing anarchy. It's recognizing lawlessness. It's rewarding crime. It's rewarding terrorism. It's rewarding all that is wrong in our age... The world incarcerates a nation without even the hope of a green light at the end of the tunnel, because we don't even know if there is ever going to be a tunnel for the people of Somaliland. (Personal Interview, November 2022)

The highly politicized process of recognition has far-reaching consequences that permeate every aspect of society in de facto states like Kosovo and Somaliland. Citizens are often unable to travel freely nor reach a certain standard of living. The lack of recognition and international integration drains resources from other important issues such as economic development, education, and healthcare. As one official from Kosovo notes, "There are simply fewer capacities, less time, less finances, and fewer resources to deal with other burning issues" (Personal Interview, February 2023). Moreover, the brain drain of educated young

⁴⁵ It is important to acknowledge the complexity of the issue at hand. The recognition of de facto states is a multifaceted process influenced by numerous political factors. In today's international landscape, recognition is not solely based on merit but is highly politicized. Therefore, it is likely that entities such as the EU, UN, and other states carefully consider the geopolitical dynamics and potential consequences of granting recognition to these states. While this analysis primarily focuses on the perspectives of de facto states, it is important to recognize the broader geopolitical context in which these recognition decisions are made. Therefore, it is likely that these entities may not be intentionally acting as "hypocrites" of the liberal rules-based order but rather face the challenge of balancing competing demands and potential fallouts in their decision-making processes.

people leaving for better opportunities abroad is a significant issue for both countries. Given these serious ramifications, Kosovo and Somaliland are working tirelessly to find a balance between the two objectives of survival and recognition. However, as evidenced by the challenges faced by Kurti's government in managing the international community's demands, achieving this balance is no easy feat.

4.8 Conclusion

De facto states, by their very nature, face a number of challenges in their pursuit of survival and recognition. These states are excluded from the benefits of the international system enjoyed by UN members due to their lack of unanimous recognition. As a result, they must employ a range of strategies to attain their goals. The existing literature has examined the strategies employed by de facto states to attain their survival and recognition goals, yet it has largely considered them in isolation from one another. This article aimed to address this gap in the literature by exploring the complex interplay between survival and recognition in two de facto states, Somaliland, and Kosovo. Through a comparative analysis of their approaches, this study found that both Somaliland and Kosovo invest heavily in their security apparatuses, socioeconomic development, and internal governance structures in pursuit of survival. They also rely on informal channels of diplomacy, emphasizing their contributions to the international system, marketing themselves as representing a "force for good," increasing their integration through regional organizations, and strategically aligning with the West in pursuit of recognition. However, there were key nuances in their approaches, with Somaliland generally having to be more self-reliant in its strategies, while Kosovo pursued recognition and survival in partnership with the international community.

In terms of trade-offs and challenges they face, Somaliland and Kosovo face many similar issues given their subordinate position in international relations, though this is mitigated by their level of international engagement. While recognition and survival strategies can be mutually reinforcing, they often

require complex decisions and trade-offs. The precarious position of de facto states in the international system means that they are excluded from the benefits of the international community and must navigate the interests of international powers. Somaliland is plagued by circular issues of low development, which feed into low recognition and vice versa. To address this, they have made their case more political which in turn opens themselves up to exploitative relations. On the other hand, Kosovo has gained significant external legitimacy, but this has led to costs on account of greater international involvement. As a result, trade-offs are being made between contemporary sovereignty for the prospect of future stability, which comes at the cost of public trust and domestic legitimacy. The challenges faced by de facto states in pursuit of both domestic stability and international recognition are significant, and this study highlights the need for tailored strategies that take into account how de facto states might go about striking a balance between these two goals.

This paper has sought to highlight the intricate balance that de facto states strive to have in their pursuit of both international recognition and survival. While greater recognition can lead to future stability, it can also present challenges that may impede a state's efforts to strengthen its contemporary domestic stability. The implications of this research extend beyond the study of de facto states' international status to include debates in International Relations about sovereignty, diplomacy, governance, and international order, as well as for policymakers and practitioners working in these contexts. Future research can continue to explore the interplay between recognition and survival, consider trade-offs within each goal, understand the trajectory of challenges de facto states face at different levels of engagement, and identify other factors that guide the calculated decisions of de facto states. This could include things like the presence of minority rights, the role of the parent state and other international conditions such as war(s). Ultimately, this study

provides a nuanced understanding of the delicate balance between recognition and stability in de facto states, illuminating the complex nature of statehood and stability in the international system.

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5 Conclusion

De facto states have traditionally been sidelined in discussions of statehood and sovereignty (Kolsto 2006; Ker-Lindsay 2015). With their substantial capabilities and limited recognition, they present a perplexing anomaly that defies conventional notions of statehood in the field of IR. It was generally expected that these "pariah" states would not endure without formal recognition (Bartmann 1999). However, recent research has shed light on how these unique state entities have adeptly navigated the international system, strategically making decisions to secure their survival and engage with the global community (Ker-Lindsay 2015). While some de facto states can emulate the behaviour of recognized states, interacting and functioning in a manner similar to their counterparts, other states struggle to manage their affairs and are often influenced by external powers, relying on a patron state for their continued existence. The diverse nature of de facto states and their role demand further exploration, considering their potentially profound impact on international society in terms of geopolitics and violent conflict. This dissertation resonates with numerous scholars studying these entities, in urging a serious examination of their significance in international relations (Pegg 1998; Berg and Toomla 2009; Dembinska and Campana 2017; Pegg 2017; Ker-Lindsay and Berg 2018). The objective of this dissertation is to contribute towards fulfilling this imperative.

Moving beyond binary understandings of statehood in IR, I sought to differentiate de facto states based on their level of external legitimacy. Rather than all exhibiting the same non-status internationally, I capture the substantial variation with which de facto states engage internationally. Substantiating this, I demonstrate how experts of statehood perceive de facto states' external relations to exist upon a spectrum. I also demonstrate that IO membership and bilateral recognition by a UN member state represent the most

important attributes for de facto states' international status. Finally, I capture the calculated decisions and strategies de facto states use in achieving their objective of survival and pursuit of greater recognition.

The dissertation presents an important contribution to our understandings of de facto states' external legitimacy. The research methodology includes the development of an innovative *External Legitimacy Dataset*, a comprehensive conjoint survey experiment, and an extensive set of 35 semi-structured elite interviews. Capturing 75 years, data was collected from 31 de facto states, encompassing 20 indicators that effectively capture bilateral and multilateral relations and the geopolitical factors influencing their status. The expert survey component involved a group of 133 participants, including diplomats and academics. Furthermore, two in-depth case studies of Somaliland and Kosovo were conducted, offering valuable insights into the topic, given their distinct levels of international legitimacy. The case studies were based on an analysis of 35 semi-structured interviews with government officials from both states. Notably, I also travelled to Kosovo to conduct fieldwork.

The research findings reveal the pivotal role of external legitimacy in shaping the behaviour of de facto states. Specifically, de facto states that have established conventional avenues of interaction are more likely to gain acceptance from the international community. Intriguingly, the study also uncovers that de facto states often prioritize international recognition over statebuilding efforts to enhance their survival chances. However, the degree of engagement with recognized states significantly influences the consequences of these strategies. Accordingly, the dissertation convincingly argues for increased attention to be given to the interplay between de facto state international status, their statebuilding endeavours, and the roles they assume within the international system. By shedding light on these dynamics, the research reinforces the need for a more nuanced understanding of de facto states, their external legitimacy, and the implications they hold for global politics.

5.1 External Legitimacy and De Facto States

This dissertation provides a comprehensive exploration of the international status of de facto states and its impact on their survival, thereby aiming to enhance our understanding of these entities within the international system. By introducing a novel dataset and analyzing expert opinions on the factors influencing de facto state international status, as well as examining how variations in external legitimacy influence the decision-making of these states, this research offers valuable insights into the broader significance of de facto states.

The first article in this dissertation challenges conventional approaches to comprehending the role of de facto states in the international system. While these entities can wield considerable influence in international relations, the limited empirical investigation and inadequate operationalization of their external relations have hindered our understanding of their dynamics. De facto states function as states on the global stage and can maintain connections in international relations, much like UN members. Despite earlier studies that have examined how recognized states interact with de facto states, the existing scholarship still relies on a binary understanding and measurement of recognition. Hence, this dissertation seeks to transcend these limitations and thereby broaden our understanding of de facto states and their international status.

In order to enhance our understanding of de facto states, this research introduces a concept called external legitimacy, accompanied by a comprehensive dataset spanning the years 1945 to 2020. Moving beyond the traditional reliance on UN recognition as the sole indicator of international statehood, it is acknowledged that de facto states can possess varying degrees of acceptance and engagement within the international system. This study proposes a novel framework for assessing external legitimacy incorporating variables encompassing bilateral relations, multilateral interactions, and geopolitical factors.

To operationalize the measurement of external legitimacy, an extensive dataset is constructed and evaluated, drawing information from government websites and national as well as local news sources. Twenty indicators are combined to capture the nuanced facets of external legitimacy for 31 de facto states. Employing a Bayesian IRT model, a novel continuous measure of the latent degree of external legitimacy is generated, providing a principled assessment of all de facto states over time, complete with associated uncertainties.

The research findings bring to light substantial disparities in external legitimacy across different de facto states and throughout various time periods. Additionally, those with established avenues for interaction are more likely to gain acceptance from the international community. External legitimacy emerges as a crucial determinant shaping the behaviour of de facto states as this study uncovers the mechanisms that may contribute to heightened levels of violent conflict among de facto states with lower levels of external legitimacy. This offers novel insights into conflict dynamics and peacebuilding efforts within unrecognized states. By underscoring the importance of nuanced measures of international system participation, this article contributes to a better understanding of the dynamics of peace and conflict within de facto states and their interactions with international organizations and UN member states.

The second article presents a comprehensive examination of the concept of external legitimacy for de facto states, focusing on the perspective of academics and diplomats. To accomplish this, I employed a conjoint experiment within an elite survey, gathering data from a global sample of 133 participants. The study aimed to identify the key attributes that influence the external legitimacy of de facto states, testing six factors: regime type, membership in IOs, recognition by a UN member state, support from Great Powers, territorial claims, and the presence of separatist movements in a region. The selection of a conjoint design was deliberate, as it suits the multi-dimensional nature of external legitimacy. A non-metric

preference scaling analysis was also conducted, and the work sought to uncover subgroup differences based on respondents' geographic region and profession. Furthermore, I used the results of the conjoint experiment to predict the external legitimacy of nine contemporary de facto states. The study's findings confirm the theoretical expectations regarding the significance of the six attributes, all of which yielded statistically significant results. The results demonstrate that the combination of these attributes determines whether a de facto state is perceived to possess high or low levels of external legitimacy.

Additionally, the study identifies potential subgroup disparities in expert preferences toward these attributes. Notably, diplomats assigned greater value to social acceptance (IO membership and UN recognition) attributes and democratic governance. Conversely, academics ranked attributes such as territorial claims and the absence of separatist movements in the region as more important while considering democratic governance as less significant. The study's predicted results for external legitimacy offer valuable insights into the nuanced and continuous nature of this phenomenon for de facto states, revealing significant variations among states. This underscores the importance of conceptualizing the external legitimacy of de facto states as a continuous spectrum rather than a discrete category. Moreover, the study highlights the necessity of tracking temporal changes in the international status of de facto states.

The third article delves into the strategies employed by de facto states in their pursuit of international recognition and survival, shedding light on the challenges they face and the trade-offs they must navigate. Based on the case studies of Kosovo and Somaliland, the study examines the approaches taken by each state and argues that recognition takes precedence over statebuilding, with potential consequences depending on their level of engagement with recognized states. Drawing on 35 semi-structured elite interviews with government officials from both states, the article provides valuable insight into the strategies adopted by de facto states. It reveals that Kosovo and Somaliland prioritize their security,

socioeconomic development, and internal governance structures to ensure survival. In their quest for recognition, they employ tactics such as informal diplomacy, highlighting their earned statehood and legal rights, and forging alliances with the West. Notably, while Somaliland tends to rely more on self-reliance, Kosovo actively engages with the international community.

However, both states have encountered challenges in their pursuit of recognition and domestic stability. The study emphasizes the complex trade-offs that arise, considering the exclusive nature of the international community of states. Isolated de facto states, like Somaliland, may experience developmental stagnation due to limited engagement which can result in exploitative relationships and unfair agreements. At the same time, with greater engagement, Kosovo struggles to balance the expectations of the international community with the will of its people. As a result, both states face the choice of pursuing strategies that may boost their international standing but undermine domestic stability. The third article provides valuable insights into the strategies employed by de facto states, the challenges they encounter in the pursuit of recognition and survival, and the need to carefully balance these objectives for long-term stability and success.

In terms of synergies between the articles, both the first and second articles aim to enhance our understanding of the external legitimacy of de facto states, employing distinct approaches. While the first article focuses on capturing latent external legitimacy, the second article examines expert perceptions. The survey conducted in the second article serves as a means to validate the measurement model, providing support that the intended concept is effectively captured. The conjoint survey carried out in the study corroborates several variables incorporated in the IRT model. The estimates for the five attributes assessed in both the IRT model and the conjoint survey are statistically and substantively significant, aligning with the theoretical expectations outlined in the first article. Furthermore, by predicting external legitimacy,

additional synergies emerge. Although the second article only considers contemporary states, I extended the prediction of external legitimacy based on the conjoint survey results to all 31 de facto states. Detailed results and a discussion on this can be found in the SI File in Appendix C. Comparing the predicted legitimacy with the latent legitimacy, it becomes apparent that most of the 31 de facto states exhibit similar trajectories over time. This finding suggests that the factors considered important by experts also serve as reliable indicators within the IRT model.

5.2 Contributions of the Dissertation

This research significantly contributes to the study of de facto states and their international status, both theoretically and empirically. The theoretical framework developed in this study offers a novel conceptualization of the international status of de facto states, building upon and expanding existing literature (Ker-Lindsay 2015; Berg and Toomla 2016; Huddleston 2020). By introducing the theory of external legitimacy, this research provides a more accurate depiction of de facto states, revealing the extent to which they are accepted and participate in the international system at any given time. In doing so, it moves beyond simplistic binary categorizations of de facto state international status and beyond measures that link their external status to the opinions of their parent state (Huddleston 2020).

An important contribution of this work is its emphasis on the significance of informal practices in international relations, contributing to the work that goes beyond the traditional focus on formal structures in the field of IR (Lipson 1991; Abbott and Snidal 2000; Checkel 2001; Hardt 2013; Azari and Smith 2016; Tieku 2019). By examining both conventional relations and informal engagements of de facto states, this dissertation illuminates the strategic maneuvers employed by these entities to enhance their international position through the backchannels of international relations. Notably, it highlights the often-overlooked impact of informal actions on the status of de facto states, such as the implications of membership in

organizations like FIFA or establishing liaison offices in a non-recognizing country. Challenging the conventional emphasis on formal recognition, this research asserts that de facto states can have varying degrees of acceptance and participation in the international system even without formal UN recognition. The application of the IRT model and the conjoint analysis demonstrates how de facto states exhibit different levels of external legitimacy, confirming that their status can be better understood as a spectrum rather than a formal binary phenomenon.

Furthermore, this work contributes to research in IR by emphasizing the significance of variations among de facto states instead of focusing solely on their similarities. Despite existing as non-UN member states, these entities display substantial diversity. The three articles presented herein each provided evidence of significant differences in the external interactions of de facto states. The first article highlights substantial temporal and inter-state variations in the external legitimacy of the facto states. In the second article, experts implicitly perceive variations in legitimacy among de facto states with different combinations of attributes. The predicted legitimacy reveals a greater range of legitimacy for de facto states than what is commonly portrayed in the literature, suggesting a potential disconnect between expert perceptions and empirical realities. Last, the third article demonstrates how variations in the level of international engagement between Somaliland and Kosovo influence the decisions they make in pursuing their primary objectives. Collectively, these three articles underscore the importance of examining the international status of de facto states as a pivotal factor in shaping their domestic and international behaviour. Rather than assuming uniform behaviour among de facto states due to their non-status, this dissertation highlights the ongoing necessity to study these entities as distinct units of analysis in order to comprehend the internal divergences within them.

All three articles provide substantial evidence supporting the claims made in the existing literature regarding the crucial role of external social acceptance for de facto states' participation in the international system (Wendt 2003; Crawford 2006; Coggins 2011; Lindemann and Ringmar 2012; Erman 2013; Krasneqi 2014; Daase et al. 2015). Each article highlights the relentless efforts of de facto states to gain legitimacy in the eyes of other states, as this is instrumental for their survival. Moreover, this dissertation introduces a novel analysis of the interplay between the two primary objectives of de facto states, addressing a specific need identified by scholars specializing in this field. This breakthrough opens up new avenues for further research, which will be discussed in detail below.

From an empirical standpoint, this dissertation offers one of the most comprehensive accounts of de facto state external relations to date. A notable contribution is the creation of the innovative *External Legitimacy Dataset*, encompassing 20 indicators of external legitimacy for 31 de facto states from 1945 to 2020. This dataset holds great significance for the study of de facto states, given the profound impact of their status on their behaviour and objectives. By capturing this status over 75 years, we gain a better understanding of how it interacts with their behaviour over time. Furthermore, the inclusion of 31 de facto states from diverse regions since 1945 addresses issues related to data availability and rectifies the scholarly focus that has come from scholars often focusing on post-Soviet de facto states (Pegg 2017).

As demonstrated in the first article, this dataset enables researchers to explore critical questions, such as predicting the level of violence based on a de facto state's external legitimacy. The empirical value of this new measure should not be underestimated. External legitimacy can provide insights into various inquiries that de facto state scholars have grappled with. For example, it can shed light on how a de facto state's international status influences the quality of its democracy (Caspersen 2009; Kolsto 2012; Von Steinsdorff 2012; Ozpek 2014). Additionally, it can gauge the extent to which external legitimacy impacts

a state's development (Kolsto 2006; Isachenko 2009; Florea 2014; Florea 2017; Bakke et al. 2018). Furthermore, it can examine the influence of international status on the trajectories of de facto states, including eradication, forceful reintegration, or recognition (Florea 2017; Dembinska and Campana 2017). The dataset can also assess the relationship between external legitimacy and the strategies employed by parent states and international and regional bodies and their effect on mitigating conflicts with de facto states (Lynch 2004; Ker-Lindsay and Berg 2018; Caspersen 2018; Palani et al. 2021). Even more marginal questions, such as the effects of dependency based on a patron-client relationship on international status, can be explored using this comprehensive dataset (Kolsto 2021; Berg and Yuksel 2022). Moreover, it allows for the investigation into novel questions, such as how systemic and domestic-level conditions, such as the presence of war or minority rights, affect the external legitimacy of de facto states.

Additionally, the survey experiment represents a significant advancement, as it uses a conjoint design that is relatively underutilized in the study of de facto states, diplomacy, and informal IR. By doing so, it provides an example of how this design can be effectively employed in these areas. Furthermore, it offers the first comprehensive data on the perceptions of academics and diplomats regarding the factors that contribute to external legitimacy. This is not only crucial for practical implications, which will be discussed further, but also for advancing our overall understanding of the determinants of international status. To date, no other work has successfully identified the factors that diplomats value for external legitimacy and compared them to the beliefs of academics. Moreover, the subtle differences observed among subgroups highlight the importance of considering these nuances.

Last, this research presents a noteworthy contribution through its comprehensive and in-depth comparative analysis of two de facto states, Somaliland, and Kosovo. This unique approach directly examines the intricate interplay between the goals pursued by de facto states and the strategic decisions

they employ to attain them. The inclusion of these particular case studies is unique since most existing research predominantly focuses on post-Soviet states, neglecting a broader range of comparative cases. By encompassing de facto states situated in different regions with distinct domestic contexts and varying levels of international engagement, this study responds to the scholarly call for greater diversity in case selection (Pegg 2017).

5.3 Policy Implications

The findings of this project yield valuable insights that have significant implications for policymakers and civil society actors involved in international relations and conflict resolution. First, it is essential to challenge the prevailing stigma associated with de facto states as "pariahs" or disruptive anomalies within the international system. While some de facto states, such as those in the Donbas region of Russia, may exhibit destructive behavior, it is crucial to recognize that they do not represent the majority. This dissertation effectively demonstrates that many de facto states actively seek to emulate recognized state behavior and navigate a state of limbo within the international community for extended periods. Therefore, policy efforts should acknowledge the potential benefits of allowing partial integration of these states into the international system. As highlighted in the first article, rather than challenging the norms and values of the international system, many of these states actively endeavour to assimilate within it. Therefore, policy efforts should recognize the potential benefits of allowing partial integration of these states into the international system, as it can contribute to reduced conflicts and improved livelihoods for the substantial populations residing within them.

This claim is strongly supported by the findings for predicting violence using external legitimacy. The research indicates that external legitimacy has a significant negative impact on violence, with de facto states possessing lower levels of external legitimacy being more prone to resorting to violent means. This

underscores the potential of greater international integration to mitigate the conflicts involving de facto states. Conversely, increased isolation from the international community likely amplifies threats and potential discrimination, leading to a heightened reliance on violence. When de facto states lack external legitimacy, they often find themselves lacking allies, lacking countries invested in the resolution of their conflicts, receiving minimal support from international organizations, and lacking third-party actors facilitating dialogue with the parent state. Such circumstances increase the vulnerability of their sovereignty, thereby raising the likelihood of violence. These findings emphasize the crucial role of international integration and reputation considerations in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts within de facto states, highlighting the urgent need for further research in this domain. Policymakers and civil society actors involved in mediating and resolving these conflicts should carefully consider the merits of fostering greater integration as a means to mitigate the adverse effects of such conflicts. Importantly, the research reiterates how this integration can be pursued without compromising the principles of the international system (Ker-Lindsay 2015). This presents a unique opportunity for policymakers and civil society organizations to actively promote and facilitate the integration of de facto states, allowing them to better align with and contribute to the international system.

Additionally, this dissertation provides practical applications and concrete policy recommendations to enhance the international status of de facto states. The first and third articles illustrate how de facto states can utilize informal relationships to initiate interactions and lay the groundwork for future engagements. The IRT model shows that informal interactions can steadily increase their external legitimacy. Additionally, the case studies demonstrate how Somaliland and Kosovo have successfully expanded their relations and garnered support through informal means, particularly within the context of non-recognizing

countries such as the US (for Somaliland) and Greece (for Kosovo). This underscores the substantial maneuverability available to de facto states within the informal channels of the international system.

Furthermore, the study's findings offer encouragement to de facto states, as they indicate that the most crucial factors for improving external legitimacy are within their control. By engaging in strategic outreach and building bilateral and multilateral relationships with recognized states, de facto states can elevate their international status and enhance their standing in the global community. This practical approach allows them to allocate resources more effectively, focusing on factors that they have the power to influence rather than expending efforts on elements beyond their control. Consequently, these entities can increase their prospects of assuming a more prominent role within the international system, fostering greater stability, and achieving higher international status.

The dissertation also highlights detrimental practices that de facto states should approach cautiously. The third article emphasizes the potential risks associated with engaging Great Powers, as they may exploit them in pursuing their vested interests and consequently leave the de facto states vulnerable. It also underscores the costly trade-offs that de facto states may encounter with higher engagement in their state. The dissertation highlights the highly politicized nature of de facto state recognition, which often results in significant suffering for their populations. Consequently, it calls upon policymakers, civil society actors, and regional and international bodies to establish a more merit-based process for international recognition.

This research challenges prevailing perceptions of de facto states and provides practical insights for policymakers and civil society actors. It emphasizes the potential benefits of integration, highlights the importance of external legitimacy in reducing violence, and suggests strategic outreach and informal practices as effective strategies for improving their international status.

5.4 Limitations of the Dissertation

This dissertation is subject to certain limitations that warrant greater discussion. First, there were empirical limitations, particularly pertaining to the dataset used. As uncovered in this research, de facto states exhibit significant variation, ranging from those largely excluded (e.g., Cabinda) to those deeply integrated into the international system (e.g., Taiwan). Consequently, acquiring data for certain de facto states posed challenges. Language barriers and poor data quality from the de facto states themselves were notable barriers. Additionally, while many international and regional bodies collect data on all recognized states, such as the World Bank and IMF, for trade figures, such data availability was limited for de facto states. This information gap creates what has been referred to as "black holes" in our knowledge of these countries (Lynch 2007; Dembinska and Campana 2017). Although the dataset utilized in this research substantially advanced our understanding, there were still missing variables for certain de facto states, particularly pertaining to external military support. It is important to note that the JAGs model took this missing data into account when generating the latent external legitimacy.

Other empirical limitations pertain to the case study research. Initially, the selection of case studies was intended to encompass four states with varying levels of external legitimacy, ranging from low to high on the spectrum. However, due to the isolation of many de facto states, it proved challenging to include additional cases with lower engagement. Despite initial efforts to involve other de facto states, the availability of individuals to interview was limited. In one instance, only the Minister of Foreign Affairs was available for an interview, requiring a translator. As a result, the study focused on a comparison between two de facto states with variations in their external legitimacy rather than the originally planned four cases representing different levels on the spectrum.

Furthermore, there were additional empirical limitations in the case study research concerning fieldwork. While I could personally visit Kosovo in February 2023, circumstances prevented me from travelling to Somaliland. Safety concerns and ongoing fighting in Somaliland during that period posed constraints on conducting field research in person. Although conducting fieldwork in Kosovo provided valuable insights and a deeper understanding of the country's dynamics of survival and recognition, being unable to visit Somaliland physically presented a clear limitation. However, I am confident that the in-depth interviews conducted in lieu of travel sufficiently contributed to my understanding of Somaliland's political processes.

There are also theoretical limitations in the casework that deserve consideration. First, in developing the theoretical framework, the focus was primarily on the dynamics between de facto states, powerful actors, and the systemic conditions of the international system. This perspective draws on a combination of constructivist work on social acceptance, the constitutive legal school of statehood and the neorealist logic that influences state behaviour in the international arena. While this approach provides valuable insights into international dynamics, it does not extensively explore the role of parent-state relations for de facto states, except for discussing how international actors may insist on a dialogue between them. It is important to acknowledge that Somaliland and Kosovo have distinct relationships with their respective parent states. Kosovo has to manage a strong state that actively participates in its international affairs through minority groups, whereas Somaliland is connected to a relatively failed state that shares the same ethnic makeup. Although these dynamics are likely significant, the study does not make specific claims about their effects.

Furthermore, the study does not precisely determine the extent to which the intention of future survival influences the calculated decisions of de facto states. While the theoretical framework proposed

in this research argues that future endurance provides a comprehensive explanation for the observed dynamics, it is important to acknowledge that this is primarily a theory-building effort. Further research may uncover additional factors that contribute to these costly choices. This limitation is not unique to this project but reflects a broader constraint of qualitative research. Case study research is better suited to examine whether and how explanatory factors matter for observed outcomes rather than estimating the "causal effect" of a variable (George and Bennett 2005).

5.5 Directions for Future Research

There are numerous areas of potential research. As highlighted earlier, the dataset offers ample opportunities to delve more deeply into how external legitimacy can affect the behaviour of de facto states. Using the dataset, future research could investigate the correlation between external legitimacy and various dimensions of de facto state behaviour, including peacebuilding efforts, regime types, development initiatives, and the overall trajectory of de facto states. Research can also pinpoint what factors might contribute to de facto states having lower or higher degrees of legitimacy.

There is also the potential for further investigation into other factors that influence the decision-making processes of de facto states. This could involve examining the role of minority groups within de facto states and their impact on state behaviour, as well as delving into the complexities of parent-state relations and how they shape the actions of de facto states. Moreover, it would be valuable to explore whether there are discernible differences in the goals pursued by de facto states based on their geographical location. For instance, analyzing whether the survival strategies employed by de facto states in the post-Soviet region differ significantly from those in Sub-Saharan Africa or Europe would provide valuable insights into regional dynamics. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic, it would be crucial to examine regional constraints that may exert influence on the behaviour of de facto states.

Exploring how geopolitical, cultural, and historical factors shape the actions and aspirations of de facto states within specific regions would contribute to a deeper comprehension of their behaviour.

In addition to the aforementioned research areas, further investigation into the operations of disruptive de facto states within the international system would be highly valuable. While this study offers insights into how de facto states can navigate their external relations while aligning with international values, it is important to acknowledge that certain de facto states exhibit disruptive behaviour. Exploring the potential implications of integrating de facto states that engage in disruptive actions, such as those in the Donbas region, for conflict resolution would be particularly worthwhile. Understanding the dynamics of international status when dealing with de facto states that deviate from established international norms rather than conforming to them represents a crucial avenue for inquiry. This line of research would necessitate conducting more comparative case studies that specifically focus on the more marginalized de facto states. As suggested in this study, de facto states with higher levels of external legitimacy are more inclined to emulate the behaviour of recognized states and conform to the liberal values system. Examining how the international community interacts with and responds to de facto states with lower levels of external legitimacy that challenge international norms would provide valuable insights into the complexities of managing such situations.

Another potential area for future research lies in examining the role of international and regional organizations in perpetuating conflicts in de facto states. Officials in Somaliland and Kosovo raised several concerns in the interviews about these organizations, who were tasked with resolving these conflicts and who they believed had ulterior motives for prolonging the conflicts, warranting further investigation. By analyzing the incentives and track record of these organizations in resolving conflicts in de facto states, researchers can gain insights into the role played by international and regional actors in shaping the

trajectory of these states. A critical assessment of their actions and their impact on the conflicts would contribute to a better understanding of this dynamic.

In addition, future research can enhance the scope of the study by including the perspectives of various stakeholders. While the interviews mainly focused on de facto state elites' viewpoints, a more comprehensive understanding could be achieved by incorporating the perspectives of external state actors, as well as regional and international organizations that interact with the de facto states. By considering a broader range of perspectives, future research has the potential to offer a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of the intricate dynamics and complexities surrounding de facto states. This holistic approach would not only advance our understanding of these entities but also shed light on the interplay among different actors within the international system.

This dissertation has successfully demonstrated that de facto states embroiled in “frozen conflicts” are often actively seeking recognition and acceptance from the international community. The findings underscore the importance of exploring the intricate dynamics of statehood, international relations, status, stability, and violence. Moreover, the development of a new dataset, innovative measurement approach, the use of a conjoint experiment and casework presented in this study offer invaluable tools for scholars to further deepen their understanding of this subject matter. Consequently, this dissertation has demonstrated how de facto states should occupy a prominent position within the research on peace, conflict, statehood, and sovereignty. Ultimately it demonstrated how it is imperative to conduct further investigations into their role within the international order in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of global politics.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Shouting in the Dark (Article One)

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1 De Facto State Criteria

1.1 Defining De Facto States

In selecting de facto states, I primarily relied on Adrian Florea’s conceptualization.^[18] He defines de facto states as having the following criteria.

A de facto state:

1. Belongs to (or is administered by) a recognized country, but is not a colonial possession.
2. Seeks some degree of separation from that country and has declared independence (or has demonstrated aspirations for independence, for example, through a referendum or a “sovereignty declaration”).
3. Exerts military control over a territory or portions of territory inhabited by a permanent population.
4. It is not sanctioned by the government.
5. Performs at least basic governance functions, such as the provision of social and political order.
6. Lacks international legal sovereignty (international legal sovereignty refers to recognition from a simple majority of UN Security Council permanent members plus recognition from a simple majority of UN members).
7. Exists for at least 24 months.

I relied on the same time coverage as used in Florea’s dataset. ^[18]

1.2 De Facto State Time Coverage

Table 1. External Legitimacy Dataset: De Facto States Time Coverage

<i>De Facto State</i>	<i>Start Date</i>	<i>End Date</i>
Katanga	1960	1963
Biafra	1967	1970
Krajina	1991	1995
Chechnya	1991	1999
Anjouan	1997	2008
Tamil Eelam	1984	2009
Rwenzururu Kingdom	1963	1982
Bougainville	1975	1997
Aceh	2001	2005
Karen	1948	2020
Kachin	1961	2020
Mindanao	1973	2020
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	1974	2020
Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic	1974	2020
Cabinda	1975	2020
Casamance	1982	2020
Abkhazia	1991	2020
Kurdistan	1991	2020
Artsakh	1991	2020
Somaliland	1991	2020
South Ossetia	1991	2020
Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic	1991	2020
Republika Srpska	1992	2020
Palestine	1995	2020
Taiwan	1971	2020
Eritrea	1964	1993
East Timor	1975	2002
Kosovo	1998	2020
South Sudan	1975	2012
Donetsk Peoples Republic	2014	2020
Luhansk Peoples Republic	2014	2020

2 External Legitimacy Dataset Variables

Table 2. External Legitimacy Indicators

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Level of Measurement</i>	<i>Source</i>
Declared Recognition	Count	Official recognition declarations by state officials and through official state press releases, on government websites, and local news outlets
Formal Representation De Facto State	Count	Foreign affairs websites of both recognized and de facto states, and local news outlets in the de facto states.
Informal Representation De Facto State	Count	Foreign affairs websites of both recognized and de facto states, and local news outlets in the de facto states.
Formal Representation Abroad	Count	Foreign affairs websites of both recognized and de facto states, and local news outlets in the de facto states.
Informal Representation Abroad	Count	Foreign affairs websites of both recognized and de facto states, and local news outlets in the de facto states.
Exchange Abroad	Count	Foreign affairs websites of both recognized and de facto states, and local news outlets in the de facto states.
Exchange De Facto State	Count	Foreign affairs websites of both recognized and de facto states, and local news outlets in the de facto states.
Trade Partner	Count	IMF, WTO and UN data and de facto states data sources.
Arm Trade Partner	Count	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database [23]
External Funding	Count	UCDP Disaggregated/Supporter Dataset [22]
Sports Associations	Count	Official state press releases on government websites and local news outlets
Member in IOs	Count	De facto states' foreign affairs websites and from the websites of the IOs.

Partial Member in IOs	Count	De facto states' foreign affairs websites and from the websites of the IOs.
Observer in IOs	Count	De facto states' foreign affairs websites and from the websites of the IOs.
External Military Support	Count	UCDP Disaggregated/Supporter Dataset and NAGs data [22, 3] .
Treaty Bilateral	Count	De facto states' foreign affairs websites and from the websites of the IOs.
Treaty Multilateral	Count	De facto states' foreign affairs websites and from the websites of the IOs.
Territorial Claim	Count	Secessionist Grievances Dataset [20]
Great Power Support	Count	De facto states' foreign affairs websites and from the websites of the Great Powers, UCDP Disaggregated/Supporter Dataset and NAGs data [22, 3].
Separatist in Region	Binary	SDM Dataset [32]

3 Latent Model

This section includes supplementary information on the latent model, observed variables, priors, and model convergence. *JAGS* was used to estimate the model.[30] The model was estimated with two MCMC chains using 5000 iterations as burn-in and retaining 50000 iterations for inference. The Gelman-Rubin statistic and trace plots signal convergence. The latent trait $[\theta]$ exists for each country-year dyad. In the model the data are organized into $NT \times J$ matrix where the columns represent indicators ($j = 1, \dots, J$) and the NT rows represent each of the $t = 1 \dots, T$ years for each of the $n = 1, \dots, N$ de facto states). First, the count variables are treated as continuous and scaled as follows:

$$Y_{itj} \sim N(M_{itj}, T_j)$$
$$M_{itj} = B_j \theta_{it}$$

Second, the binary variable (separatist in region) is modelled as follows:

$$P[Y_{itj} = 1] = F(\alpha_j + \theta_{it}\beta_j)$$

The $F(\cdot)$ denotes the logistic cumulative distribution function.

I use an independent normal prior on the latent estimates:

$$\theta_{it} \sim N(0, 1)$$

I use normal priors for all difficulty parameters, and normal priors are truncated to be positive for all discrimination parameters.

$$a_j \sim N(0, 100)$$
$$b_j \sim N(0, 100)^+$$

Note that the discrimination parameter for “Formal Representation in the De Facto State” is set deterministically to 1 to aid model identification.

Finally, I use a student’s t prior for the variance truncated to be positive:

$$\tau_j \sim S + (1, 100, 1)^+$$

The model was estimated with *JAGS* and two MCMC chains and had a burn-in of 5000.

50,000 samples were saved for reference and no thinning was used. Both the Gelman-Rubin statistics and trace plots provide clear evidence of convergence.

4 Exploratory Factor Analysis

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to assess the dimensionality of the latent trait. Seventeen of the count variables were used in this analysis. Region was excluded because the binary variable was not compatible with the EFA, and external military support and external funding were removed as they have several years of missing data, and the EFA requires complete cases. For the EFA, I used the *promax* function, which allowed for an oblique rotation. The scree plot indicates that the underlying structure of the data is unidimensional as the “elbow bend” is at 2 factors meaning we only need to keep one factor. [13, 17]

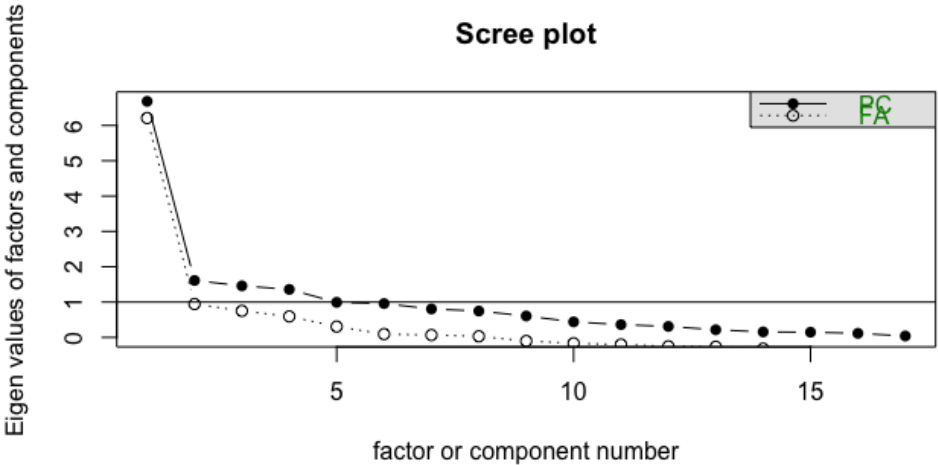


Figure 1. Scree Plot

5 Violence Models

5.1 TSCS Multilevel Logit Models

To deepen my understanding of the relationship between external legitimacy and violence, I conducted a comprehensive analysis using two multilevel logistic regression models that incorporated various covariates. To ensure the inclusion of relevant independent variables, I drew from existing literature on separatist violence and civil conflict to identify two sets of variables. By examining the relationship between violence and external legitimacy across different combinations of covariates, I gained insight into how this relationship might vary given differences in the sample, such as differences in the time frame or in the inclusion of certain de facto states. The use of two-bloc sequential models was critical in determining whether external legitimacy consistently predicted violence. Furthermore, by merging the first two models into the full model, I was able to determine the relative impact of each variable. This approach allowed me to develop a more nuanced understanding of the effect of external legitimacy on violence.

The first model aimed to examine the impact of de facto-state access to state power and their geographic features on the likelihood of separatist groups engaging in violence. To do so, I relied on the *SDM Dataset* [32]. Access to state power has been recognized as a significant determinant of violence. [11] To capture this variable, the model included accommodations, concessions, restrictions, and the power status of de facto states in relation to their parent state. Additionally, geographic features have been found to be important predictors of violence, including the concentration and size of the group, as well as its resources.[35, 24, 14, 2] In order to capture these variables, the model incorporated group concentration, group size, and hydrocarbon reserves. Furthermore, the region of the de facto state was included as a control variable in the model. The coding notes for Model One can be found in **Table 2**.

The second model included variables from the *De Facto States Dataset*[18] on group cleavages, rebel capability and transnational relations. The literature suggests that religious and ethnic group cleavages are important factors in predicting violence, particularly when there are salient differences between the separatist group and the central state actors. [21, 34, 28, 31] To capture this variable, the model included variables that assess the ethnic and religious differences of the de facto state in comparison to its parent state. Additionally, rebel capability has been recognized as a crucial factor in determining the likelihood of violence, including military capacity, location, and group cohesiveness. [15, 14, 16] To capture this variable, the model incorporated variables on relative rebel

capability, the power balance between the de facto state and the parent state, strategic location, and group fragmentation. Lastly, transnational relations, such as the presence of ethnic kin in a neighbouring state. [12] and the presence of a diaspora [33], have also been found to influence the likelihood of violence. To capture this variable, the model included variables that determine whether there is ethnic kin in a neighbouring country and whether the group has a large diaspora abroad. The model also included the Cold War years as a control variable. A more detailed analysis of the variables included in Model Two can be found in **Table 3**.

Based on the findings presented in **Table 3** of the main text, it is evident that external legitimacy consistently predicts violence across all three models. Notably, in the first model, the power status level of "discrimination" yielded a positive and significant result. In the second model, fragmentation was significant across three levels, with "broad coalition of equals" showing a negative effect, while "fragmented hegemonic" and "extremely fragmented" both yielded positive effects. Additionally, military personnel and power balance were both significant and negative, whereas the Cold War had a positive and significant effect. In the full model, group size and the power status level "discriminated" were found to have a positive and significant correlation with violence, while the power status level of "powerless" and fragmentation level of "broad coalition of equals" were both significant and negative. These results align with the existing literature on separatist violence, which suggests that discrimination from the center, rebel capability, group size, and fragmentation are all factors that influence de facto states' willingness to engage in violence. Worth noting is that de facto states that are considered "powerless" are less likely to resort to violence, which could be attributed to their complete exclusion from the state and, therefore, the lack of impact of being excluded from politics at the center. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between violence and de facto states, it is crucial to conduct further research that expands upon these findings in greater detail.

5.2 Variables for Violence Model

Note: Brief coding descriptions are taken directly from the codebooks of the datasets used. Please see the relevant codebooks for more details.

Table 3. Model One

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Source</i>
violsd	Dummy indicating whether an SDM was involved in a violent separatist conflict in a given year, including both high- and low-level separatist violence	SDM Dataset [32]
PyPhaseTime, IPyPhase- TimeE2, IPyPhase- TimeE3	Py stands for peace years. The year of the start date is always coded as 0. It is 1 in the second year, 2 in the third, etc. The count reverts back to 0 if there was conflict in the previous year.	SDM Dataset [32]
groupcon	Dummy indicating whether an SDM group is spatially concentrated. A group is considered spatially concentrated if at least 50% of group members reside in a geographically contiguous territory where they make up at least 50% of the local population.	SDM Dataset [32]
groupzise	SDM groups' population relative to the country's total population.	SDM Dataset [32]
hydrocarbon	Dummy indicating whether the territory that is claimed by SDMs includes hydrocarbon reserves (oil or gas) based on the PETRODATA by Lujala et al. (2007).	SDM Dataset[32]
accomm	Four-point ordinal variable indicating whether the state accommodated an SDM group in a given year, including concessions on cultural rights, autonomy, and independence, as well as concessions on access to central state power	SDM Dataset [32]

res	Binary variable flagging years in which the state restricts an SDM group's level of self-rule (i.e., decreases its level of autonomy or revokes its independence) or reduces its cultural rights status (in particular linguistic and religious rights).	SDM Dataset [32]
con	This binary variable tracks concessions by the state to SDM groups in the form of policies that increase SDM groups' levels of self-rule (i.e., increase their autonomy or even give them independence) and/or increase their cultural rights status (in particular linguistic and religious rights).	SDM Dataset [32]
region	The geographic location of the territory for which a movement is seeking greater SD.	SDM Dataset [32]
pwrstat	This variable indicates the level of an ethnic group's access to central state power in a given year.	SDM Dataset [32]

Table 4. Model Two

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Source</i>
violsd	Dummy indicating whether an SDM was involved in a violent separatist conflict in a given year, including both high- and low-level separatist violence	SDM Dataset [32]
PyPhaseTime, IPyPhase- TimeE2, IPyPhase- TimeE3	Py stands for peace years. The year of the start date is always coded as 0. It is 1 in the second year, 2 in the third, etc. The count reverts back to 0 if there was conflict in the previous year.	SDM Dataset [32]
reldiff	Coded 1 if the majority of the population in the de facto state embraces a different religion from the majority population of the parent state.	De Facto States Dataset [18]
ethnic	Coded 1 if the majority of the population of the de facto state has a different ethnicity from the majority population of the parent state	De Facto States Dataset [18]
dfsmil	Number (in thousands) of active soldiers of the de facto state (dfsmil).	De Facto States Dataset [18]
pwrbal	Ratio of de facto state military personnel to parent state military personnel (pwrbal)	De Facto States Dataset [18]
kineigh	This variable (kineigh) codes for the presence of de facto state ethnic kin in a neighboring country.	De Facto States Dataset [18]
dias	This variable (dias) codes for the presence of a large diaspora originating from the de facto state	De Facto States Dataset [18]
frag2	This scale has three constitutive dimensions: number of organizations, degree of institutionalization and the distribution of power among states	De Facto States Dataset [18]
cw	This variable (cw) is coded 1 for years 1945-1989, and 0 for years 1990-2011.	De Facto States Dataset [18]

6 Convergent Validity

6.1 Statebuilding and External Legitimacy

There is a fundamental but somewhat ambiguous relationship between statebuilding and the international recognition of states. State recognition has historically served as a proxy for empirical statehood, as states were admitted to the international system based on meritocratic grounds. However, the recognition process has shifted to become largely based upon normative and political considerations. Since then, there has been a proliferation of recognized states with low levels of statebuilding and failing institutions and de facto states with significant statebuilding and more robust institutions. While the degree of statebuilding may no longer be a determinant of international state recognition, scholarship has demonstrated its intrinsic link to legitimacy.

Several articles explore the relationship between de facto statebuilding efforts and their lack of international recognition.[9, 7, 26, 25, 29, 4, 27] Of pertinence to this article is the concept of "earned recognition". Pegg notes that "having created viable independent entities has become central to their strategy for gaining recognition: de facto states increasingly argue that they have earned their recognition, that they have proved themselves to be viable states." [29] De facto states consistently frame their quest for recognition as something they deserve based on their maintenance of stable and effective entities. [8] However, as Caspersen notes, arguments for "earned recognition" often lead to the creation of "international links" rather than full recognition.[10, 6, 8] Often, for new de facto states, the main priority is to convince both their citizens and the world that they have successfully transitioned from "war makers" to "state makers." [26] It is likely a combination of both their desire to survive as an entity and their hopes of being perceived as a legitimate state that encourages de facto states to develop their capabilities.[10]

The causal direction of the relationship between external legitimacy and statebuilding remains unclear. On the one hand, statebuilding could lead to increases in external legitimacy. De facto states with effective governance institutions would likely have greater external legitimacy for two key reasons. First, by mirroring other recognized states, they are more likely to be accepted as a legitimate political entity than if they do not have the accepted characteristics of a modern state. Second, with an effective state, de facto states would no longer be primarily focused on their survival and would have time to establish and improve their relationships with other recognized states. On the other hand, external legitimacy could also lead to increases in statebuilding. Often, de facto states have external patrons, relations with IOs, and other recognized states. These external relations can

provide them with funding for statebuilding initiatives and military support.

The purpose of this section is not to reveal or test the direction of this relationship. Instead, if I have theorized and measured external legitimacy correctly, indicators that capture statebuilding should be positively correlated with my measure of external legitimacy. If they are positively correlated, this signifies that my measure has convergent validity.

Convergent validity is the extent to which two concepts converge, given that they are theoretically related. [5] High convergence is identified if the correlations of independent measures of the same trait are significantly different from 0. To assess convergence, external legitimacy is correlated with indicators related to statebuilding. I rely on the *Rebel Quasi-Institutions Dataset*. [1] I include fifteen indicators of statebuilding that cover a state's security apparatus, social provisions, and, more generally, its institutions. I use the *polycor* package to estimate the correlations between each binary indicator of statebuilding and the median values of the posterior distributions of external legitimacy. [19]

6.2 Statebuilding Variables

Note: Brief coding descriptions are taken directly from Albert’s codebook.^[1] Please see the relevant codebook for more details.

Table 5. Statebuilding Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Source</i>
Transportation	This variable captures bus, shuttle or other transportation services for civilians.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Taxation	This variable captures when the rebel group taxes civilians or civilian businesses.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Police	This variable captures rebel policing provided for intra-civilian relations.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Law	This variable captures when rebels establish laws over civilian behavior.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Justice	This variable captures rebel justice systems, which includes courts, prisons, and enforcement of judicial decisions. It must be a civilian service.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Infrastructure	This variable captures rebel provided infrastructure and includes building or repairing roads, bridges, wells, or community buildings (orphanages, libraries, etc.).	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Housing	This variable captures when rebels assist with providing civilians with housing.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Education	This variable captures rebel-created or directed education for civilians.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Health	This variable captures when rebels provide health services for civilians.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Currency	This variable captures when rebels print or use their own currency, distinct from the official currency of the state.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Constitution	This variable captures when a rebel group writes a constitution.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Border	This variable occurs when rebels create a special unit dedicated to patrolling an established boundary or border.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]

Armed Forces	This variable captures the presence of a professional and conventional military force.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]
Welfare/Aid	This variable captures when rebels provide welfare or aid to civilians.	Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset [1]

6.3 Convergent Validity Results

Figure 2. Convergent Validity Correlations

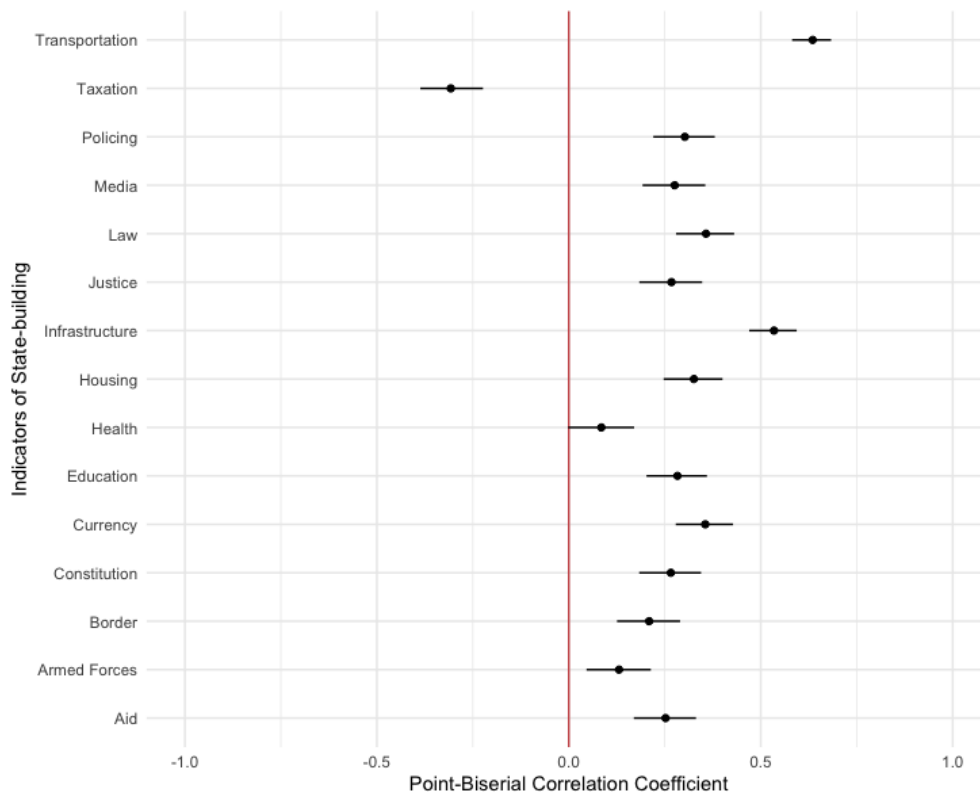


Figure 2 plots the point-biserial correlation coefficients. As demonstrated in the figure, fourteen of the fifteen indicators of statebuilding are statistically different from zero. Thirteen of the fifteen indicators correlate positively with external legitimacy, while taxation correlates negatively with the measure. This suggests that if external legitimacy increased, taxation would decrease, and vice versa. This also suggests that external legitimacy and the other thirteen indicators would move in a similar direction, increasing and decreasing together. Health is not statistically significant. In order of the size of the correlation coefficient, transportation is the largest, followed by infrastructure, law, currency, housing, policing, taxation, education, justice, constitution, aid, border, armed forces, and health.

Empirically, this test provides evidence that the external legitimacy measure has convergent validity. External legitimacy was positively correlated with thirteen of the fifteen indicators of statebuilding. Though this test does not uncover a causal relationship between the two concepts, it does, however, offer an interesting starting point for future research. Does statebuilding have a different relationship with recognition than external legitimacy? Are there only certain aspects of statebuilding that matter? For instance, does taxation have less of an effect? While statebuilding is not a necessary precondition for recognition, exploring how different aspects of statebuilding may affect or predict external legitimacy could be rewarding.

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Appendix B: Who Counts as a State (Article 2)

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- 1.2 Power Calculations 5
- 1.3 Supplementary Attributes 6
- 1.4 Conjoint Results 9
- 1.5 Non-Metric Preference Scaling Ranking by Subgroups 13
- 1.6 Non-Metric Preference Scaling Subgroup Comparisons 16

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1 Elite Survey

1.1 Survey Definitions and Questions

In the next section, we present to you a series of hypothetical **de facto states**.

De facto states are countries that are **not members of the United Nations**, yet, **control territory, develop their own institutions**, and **have limited bilateral and multilateral engagements with other states**. In this survey, we would like to get your opinion on the internal and external attributes that you believe to be important relating to a de facto state's external legitimacy.

To get at this, we will present you with 15 sets of unique hypothetical de facto states. We will then ask you to choose between each pair, and rank the de facto states external legitimacy for each of the 15 sets.

Figure 1. Survey Description of De Facto State

	Country A	Country B
Type of Government	Democracy	Non-democracy
Recognition by UN Member States	Recognized by a UN member state	Recognized by a UN member state
Presence of Separatist Movements in Region	Other separatist movements are in the same region as the de facto state	Other separatist movements are in the same region as the de facto state
International Organization Membership	Is a member of an international organization	Is not a member of an international organization
Territorial Claims	Not reclaiming former territory	Reclaiming former territory
Great Power Relationship	Has support from a Great Power	Does not have support from a Great Power

Figure 2. Conjoint Table Example

Question 1

Please read the profiles of the de facto states carefully. Then, please indicate which of the two de facto states you personally believe would have more external legitimacy.

Figure 3. Survey Question 1

Question 1

Please read the profiles of the de facto states carefully. Then, please indicate which of the two de facto states you personally believe would have more external legitimacy.

Figure 4. Survey Question 2

If you had to choose, which of the country profiles would you say has more external legitimacy?

Country A

Country B

Figure 5. Survey Question 3

On a 1-7 point scale with 1 being no external legitimacy and 7 being the maximum amount of external legitimacy, where would you place **Country A** ?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
External Legitimacy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 6. Survey Question 4

On a 1-7 point scale with 1 being no external legitimacy and 7 being the maximum amount of external legitimacy, where would you place **Country B** ?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
External Legitimacy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 7. Survey Question 5

1.2 Power Calculations

To estimate the power, I used simulated data to see the probability of an individual attribute of external legitimacy being statistically significant across different effect sizes and the number of tasks. I held the sample size and residual standard error constant at 150 respondents and 1. Based on this simulation, I decided to use 15 tasks as it appears to be the best chance at reaching the 0.8 threshold across the effect sizes.

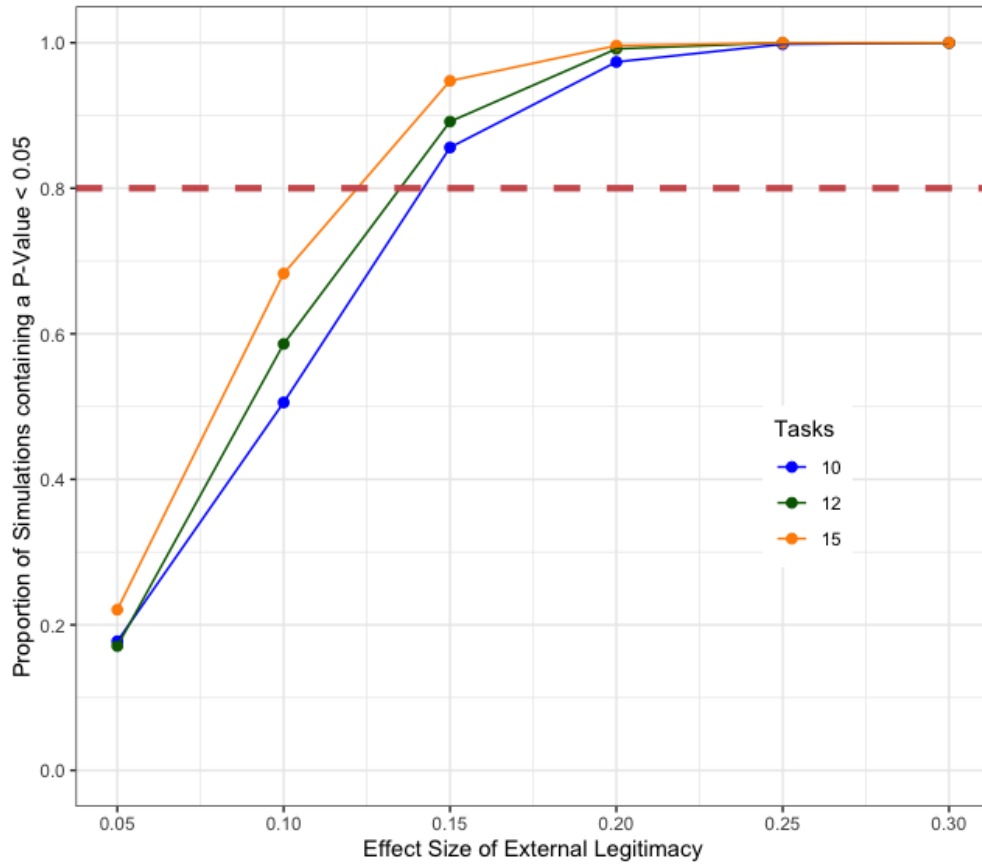


Figure 8. Conjoint Power Calculations

1.3 Supplementary Attributes

The survey asked respondents if they could think of any other attributes and 38% of them did. Upon review of the table below, it can be noted that many of the mentioned attributes could be indirectly captured by the included attributes. For example, the democratic regime type could be seen as a proxy for the protection of human rights. While attributes like international trade are crucial, they were not included in this study due to power considerations. The decision was also influenced by the fact that the other six attributes were deemed to have a greater impact on de facto state international status in the existing literature.

Table 1. Supplementary Attributes

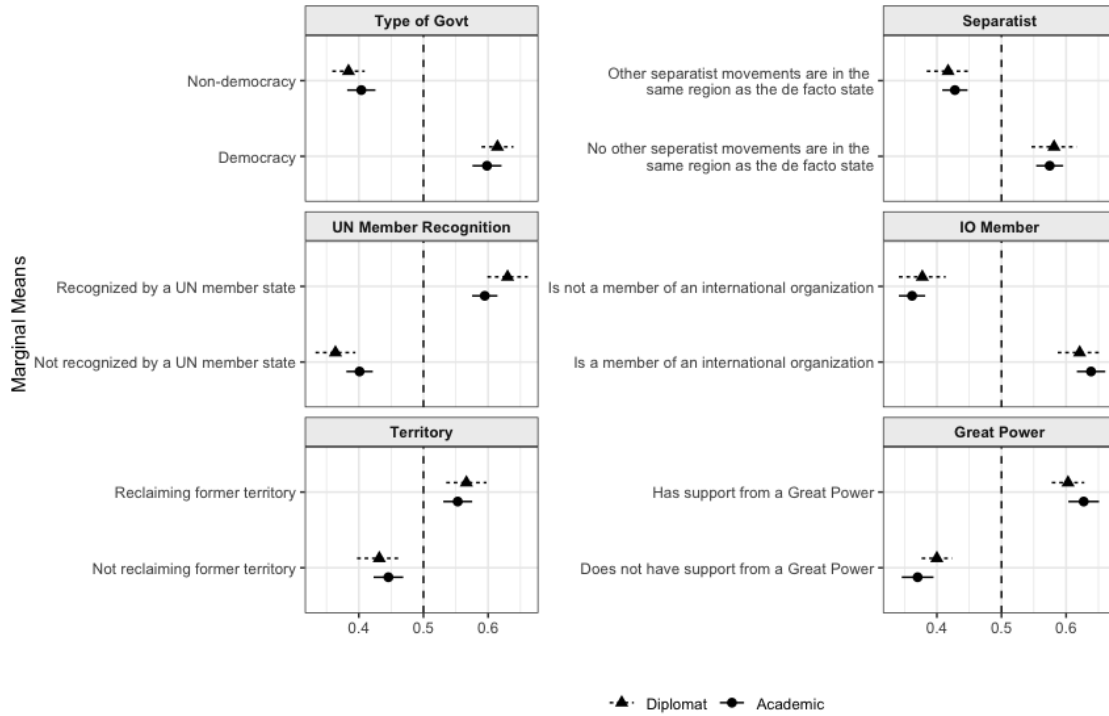
<i>Row</i>	<i>Attribute</i>
1	Politics of recognition for minorities, immigration policy, rule of law
2	Presence or absence of civil conflict
3	Internal legitimacy (non-democracy), functional state capacity, good governance, the extent of de facto states' diplomatic outreach, both public and conventional diplomacy
4	Resources of the country (i.e. oil)
5	Colonial Borders
6	Human rights
7	Regional politics
8	(1) Whether it is effectively a puppet of an existing state. (2) Whether its creation was tainted by illegality, e.g., unlawful use of force or genocide. (3) Whether its people have a right to self-determination
9	International trade
10	Resources
11	Active warfare in region
12	Regional dynamics
13	Adherence to international norms
14	Commission of international crimes and illegal use of force
15	Armed conflict
16	Human rights and norms
17	size (land area + population), ranking a least upper middle-income country on World Bank classification
18	Injustices against the people of the separatist entity

19	Region of the world
20	International wars
21	Heavy warfare
22	abiding by international norms
23	Multiple recognition. Not enough to just have one member state.
24	Grievances, ethnic conflict
25	Proxy relations
26	GDP
27	State Capacity
28	Colonies
29	Level of trade, how much they participate
30	How they separated. War? Peaceful separation? Ethnic cleansing?
31	Parent state
32	Level of corruption in the country
33	Human development score, human rights protection
34	Casualties
35	number of imports and exports, GDP
36	Proxy relationship and/or proxy wars
37	Economic relationships or economic clout. I'm not sure how you would measure that.
38	Territorial Integrity, consultation with state they are leaving
39	Human right abuses
40	If they abide by international laws
41	Minority Rights
42	Region of the world state is in
43	War
44	Trade levels
45	Patron state
46	Willingness to play by the rules
47	Region
48	How many UN members recognize them
49	Historical land rights. Strength of the state they are leaving
50	Amount of violence
51	Relations with parent state, economic viability, the length and nature of armed conflict



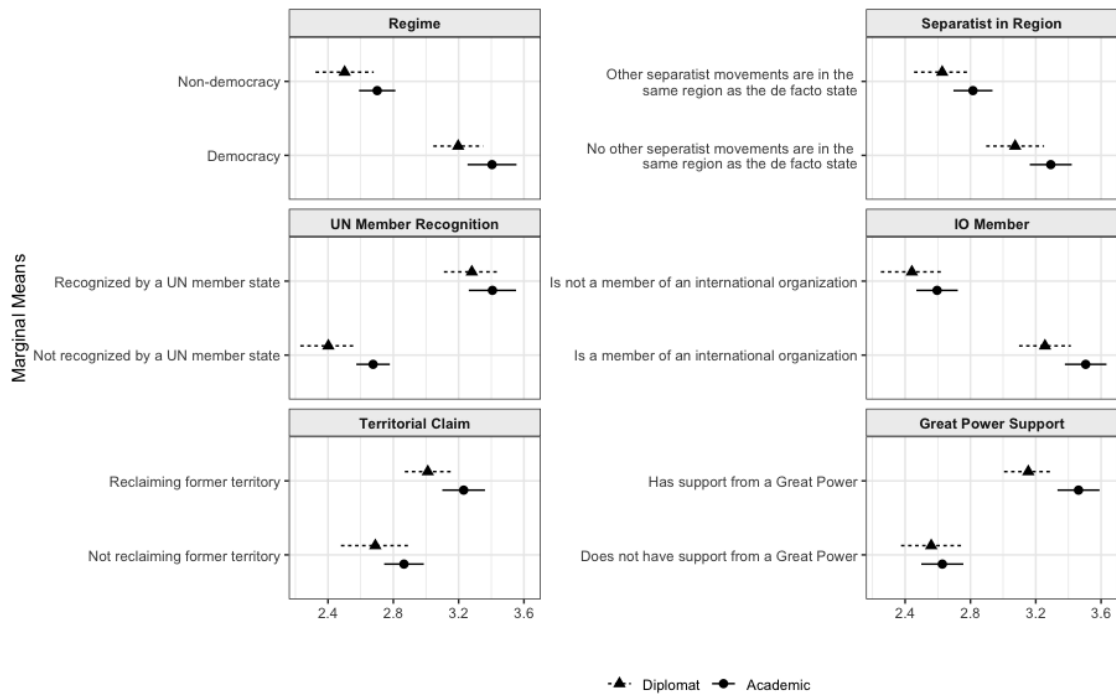
1.4 Conjoint Results

Figure 9. Subgroup Differences of Diplomats and Academics (Forced-Choice)



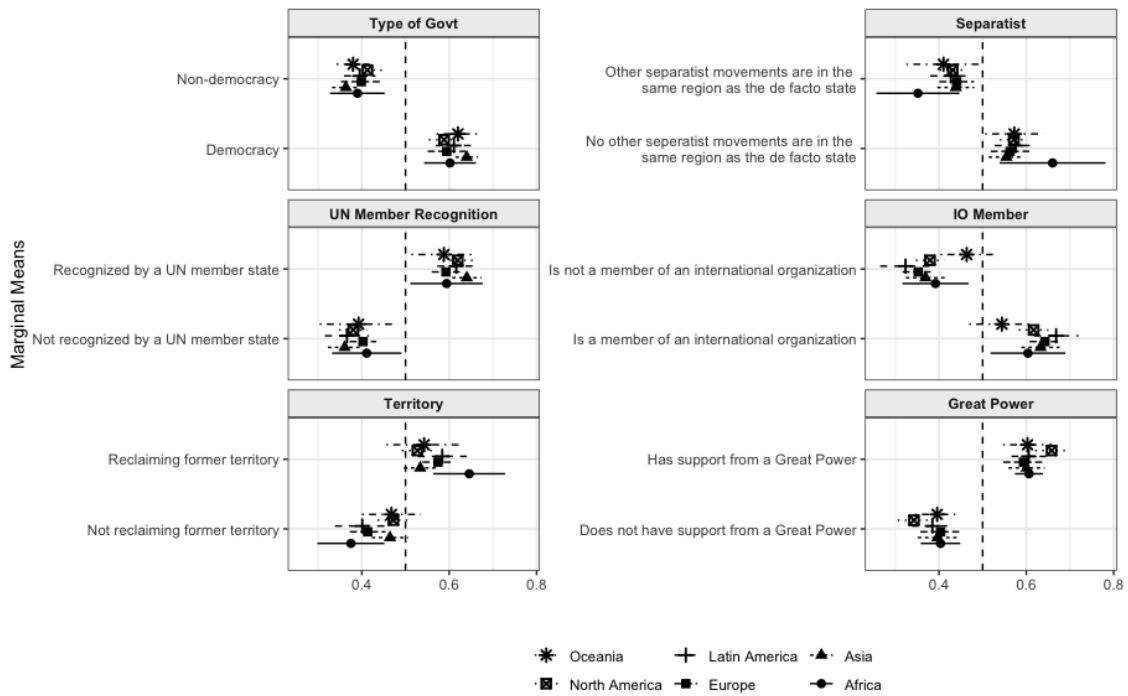
Point estimates represent the subgroup marginal means. Lines denote 95% confidence intervals. There are no statistically significant differences.

Figure 10. Subgroup Differences of Diplomats and Academics (Scale)



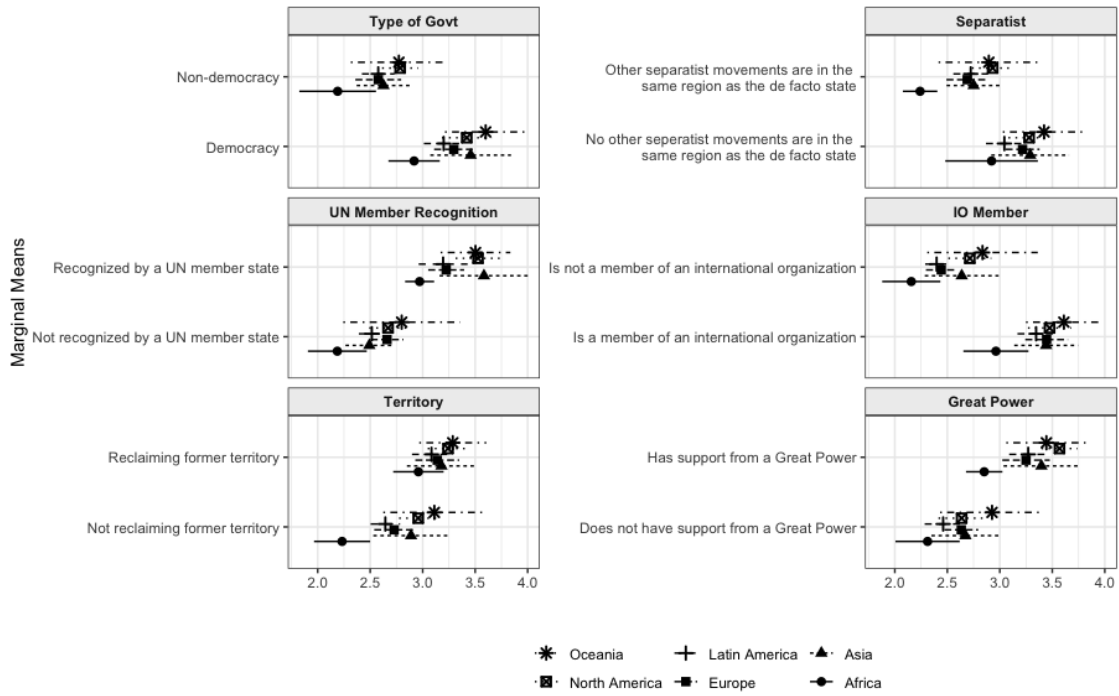
Point estimates represent the subgroup marginal means. Lines denote 95% confidence intervals. There are no statistically significant differences.

Figure 11. Subgroup Differences by Region (Choice)



Point estimates represent the subgroup marginal means. Lines denote 95% confidence intervals. There are no statistically significant differences.

Figure 12. Subgroup Differences by Region (Scale)



Point estimates represent the subgroup marginal means. Lines denote 95% confidence intervals. There are no statistically significant differences.

1.5 Non-Metric Preference Scaling Ranking by Subgroups

* In ascending order.

Average:

- IO Membership
- Territorial Claim
- No Separatist Movement in Region
- UN Member Recognition
- Great Power Support
- Democratic

Academic:

- Territorial Claim
- No Separatist Movement in Region
- IO Membership
- Great Power support
- UN Member Recognition
- Democratic

Diplomat:

- UN membership
- IO Membership
- Democratic
- No Separatist Movement in Region
- Great Power Support
- Territorial Claim

Asia:

- IO Membership
- UN Member Recognition
- No Separatist Movement in Region
- Democratic
- Great Power Support
- Territorial Claim

Latin America:

- IO Membership
- UN member recognition
- No Separatist Movement in Region
- Territorial Claim
- Great Power Support
- Democratic

North America:

- Territorial Claim
- No Separatist Movement in Region
- IO Membership
- Great Power support
- UN Member Recognition
- Democratic

Europe:

- Territorial Claim
- No Separatist Movement in Region

- IO Membership
- Great Power Support
- UN member recognition
- Democratic

Africa:

- UN membership
- Democratic
- IO membership
- Great Power support
- No Separatist Movement in the region
- Territorial claim

1.6 Non-Metric Preference Scaling Subgroup Comparisons

Table 2. Non-Metric Rank Order Sub-group Comparisons

	Estimate	Lower	Upper	Significant?
Academics and Diplomats	33.15	7.84	53.94	Yes
Africa and Asia	50.87	15.34	57.27	Yes
Africa and Europe	12.49	-31.52	50.72	No
Asia and Europe	36.81	-10.82	57.16	No
Africa and Latin America	36.01	-15.82	57.12	No
Asia and Latin America	52.47	6.18	57.29	Yes
Europe and Latin America	51.35	8.09	57.28	Yes
Africa and North America	19.97	-14.66	49.79	No
Asia and North America	42.43	5.16	57.15	Yes
Europe and North America	56.76	34.09	57.29	Yes
Latin America and North America	54.32	17.47	57.29	Yes

2 Predicted External Legitimacy Variables

Table 3. External Legitimacy Indicators

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Level of Measurement</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Source</i>
UN Member Recognition	Binary	Coded as 1 if they are recognized by a UN Member State	Self-collected through foreign affairs websites of both recognized and de facto states, and local news outlets in the de facto states.
Membership in International Organization	Binary	Coded as a 1 if they are a member of an international organization	Self-collected through de facto states' foreign affairs websites and from the websites of the IOs.
Regime Type	Binary	Coded as 1 if a state is considered to be "free"	Freedom House Data ¹
Territorial Claim	Binary	Coded as 1 if: it is on the Decolonization list, had prior statehood since 1816; joined a union; was a separate colonial administration; was ousted from a territory; a part of a breakaway state	Secessionist Grievances Dataset and self-collected [2]
Great Power Support	Binary	Coded as 1 if has one of the following types of support from a Great Power: formal exchanges, military support, external funding and bilateral recognition. Great Powers were determined using the COW Data	De facto states' foreign affairs websites and from the websites of the Great Powers, UCDP Disaggregated/Supporter Dataset [1] and NAGs data[4].

¹For this variable, Freedom Houses "Free" is often considered to capture "liberal democracies" to the exclusion of "electoral democracies." As noted in their 2023 methodology: Freedom House's "electoral democracy" designation should not be equated with "liberal democracy," a term that implies a more robust observance of democratic ideals and a wider array of civil liberties. In Freedom in the World, most Free countries could be considered liberal democracies, while some Partly Free countries might qualify as electoral, but not liberal, democracies.

Separatist in Region	Binary	Coded as 1 if there was a separatist movement in the same region as the de facto state	SDM Dataset [3]
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References

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Appendix C: Conclusion

The results displayed in **Figure 1-10** demonstrate the empirical validity of the measure and support my theory of external legitimacy, which underpins the latent construct. The findings from the survey contribute to our understanding of what academics and diplomats think is important for increasing the external legitimacy of de facto states and, in turn, lend support for the IRT model.

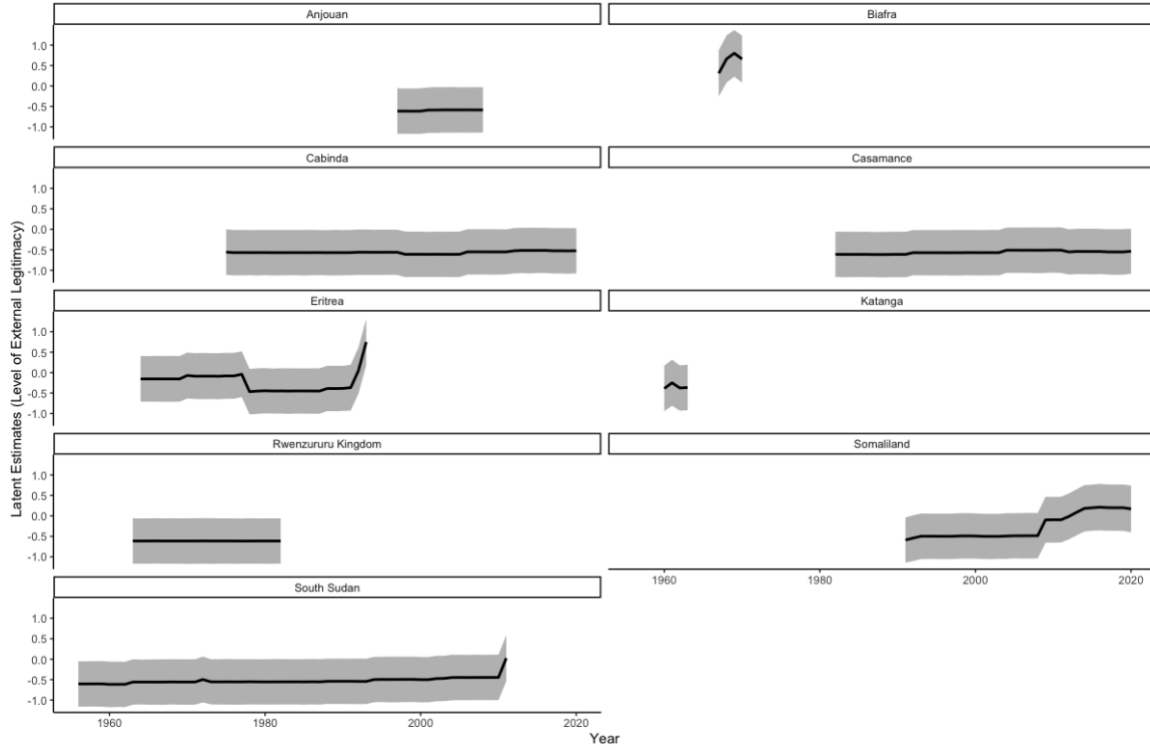
In a comparison of the latent estimates with the predicted conjoint estimates, we can see that the trajectories of the de facto states are similar. Within each measure, the track of external legitimacy for the de facto states is the same overall, often increasing or decreasing in a similar pattern. For Kosovo, for instance, we can see in both plots that they have a significant climb over time that stagnates in the early 2010s. The predicted estimates do, however, have more variation for the de facto states, and there are some slight differences between the models. The variation is likely related to the level of measurement and the number of variables used. The IRT model has more indicators and count data, whereas the predicted legitimacy is based on five binary indicators.¹ To understand why this might contribute to greater variation, we can use the example of South Sudan. South Sudan starts with a higher external legitimacy that decreases due to the presence of separatist movements in the region. However, the latent model does not capture these differences since this item is less strongly related to the latent construct compared to some of the other items. Having more items at a higher level of measurement means that a change in a single indicator would result in less variation than if it were the contrary.

There may also be differences, given the purpose of each model. While the conjoint assesses what diplomats and academics may consider important for external legitimacy, the IRT uncovers how reliable these indicators are for capturing the underlying dimension. This idea is supported when considering the ordering of the coefficients for the indicators in the models. A comparison of the two models suggests that while the presence of other separatist movements in the region is more important for experts than territorial claims, the former is much more reliable for the latent IRT dimension.² Despite slight variations, the similarities of the estimates for the de facto states in both models help confirm the theoretical grounds of the IRT model.

¹ Regime type was excluded from predicted legitimacy for this comparison due to limited data for the de facto states.

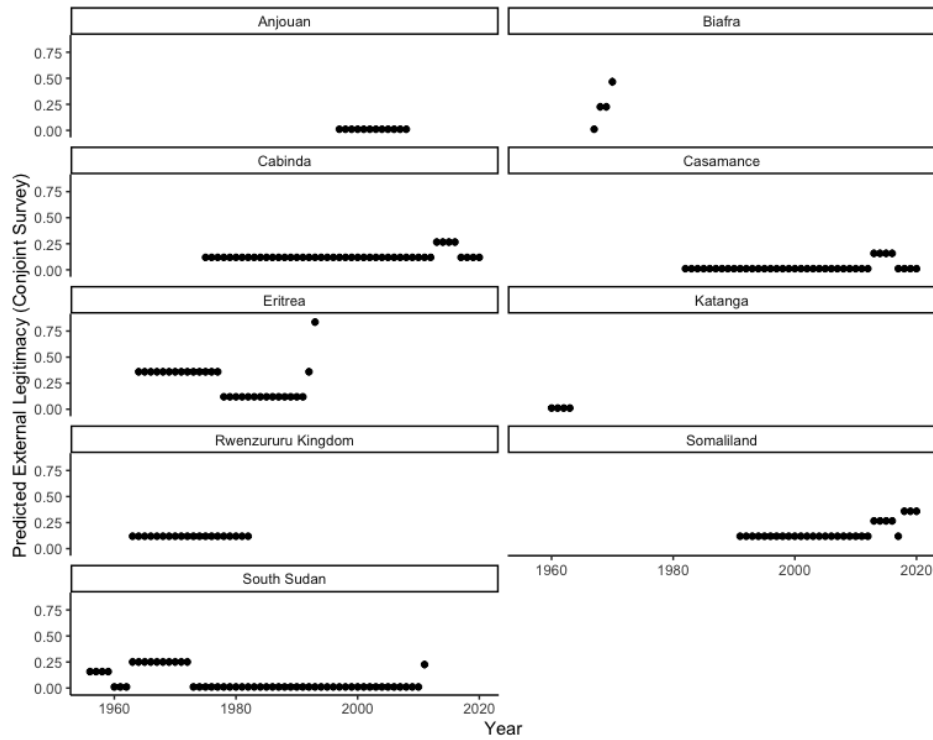
² This is also echoed in the preference scaling analysis in article two.

Figure 1: Latent External Legitimacy - Sub-Sahara Africa



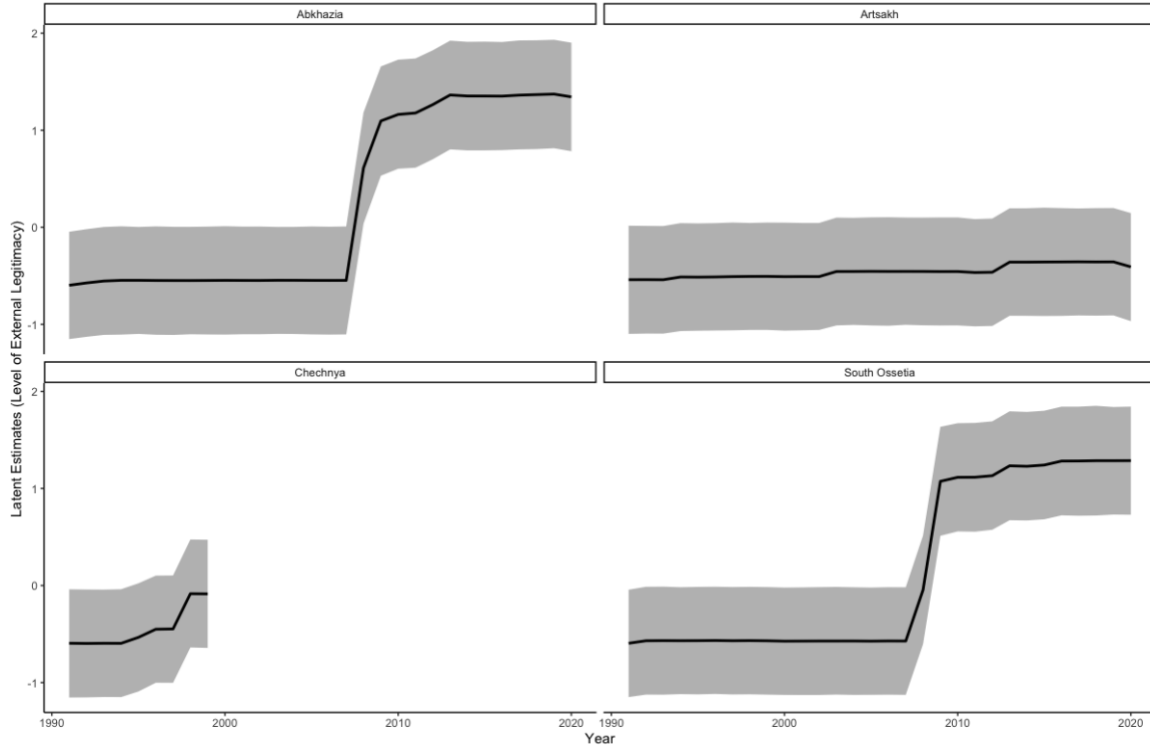
Point estimates represent the median value from the posterior distribution of latent estimates. Shaded regions denote 95% percent credible intervals.

Figure 2: Predicted External Legitimacy - Sub-Sahara Africa



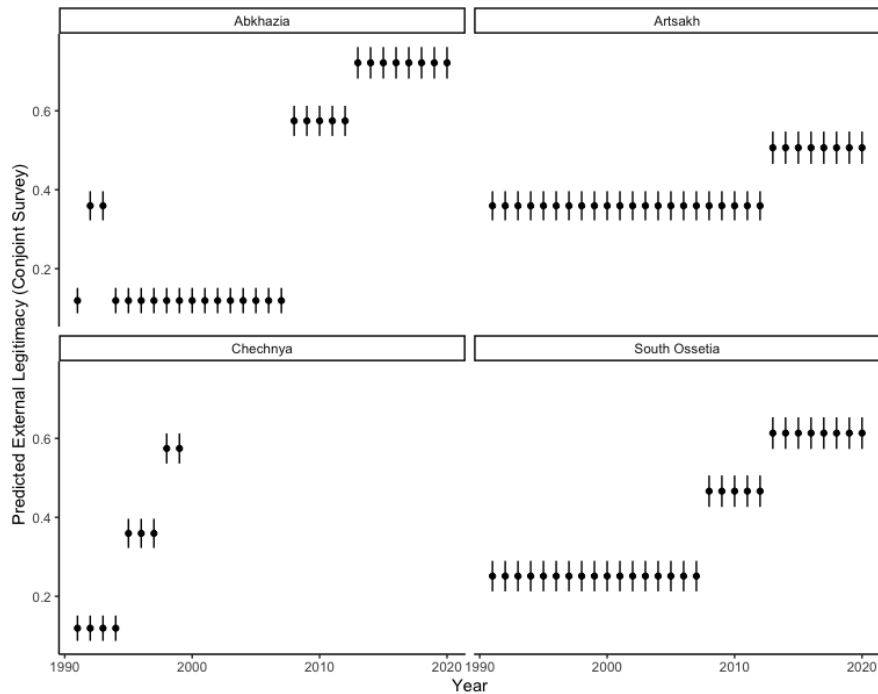
Point estimates represent the mean value. Lines denote 95% percent confidence intervals.

Figure 3: Latent External Legitimacy - Central Asia



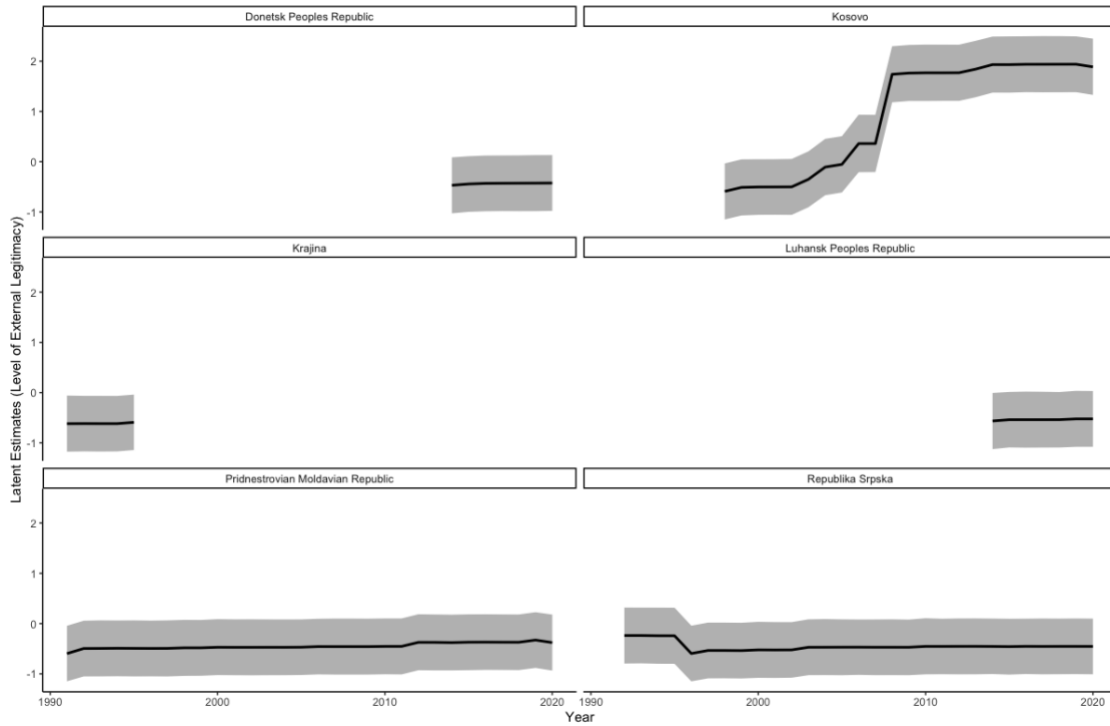
Point estimates represent the median value from the posterior distribution of latent estimates. Shaded regions denote 95% percent credible intervals.

Figure 4: Predicted External Legitimacy - Central Asia



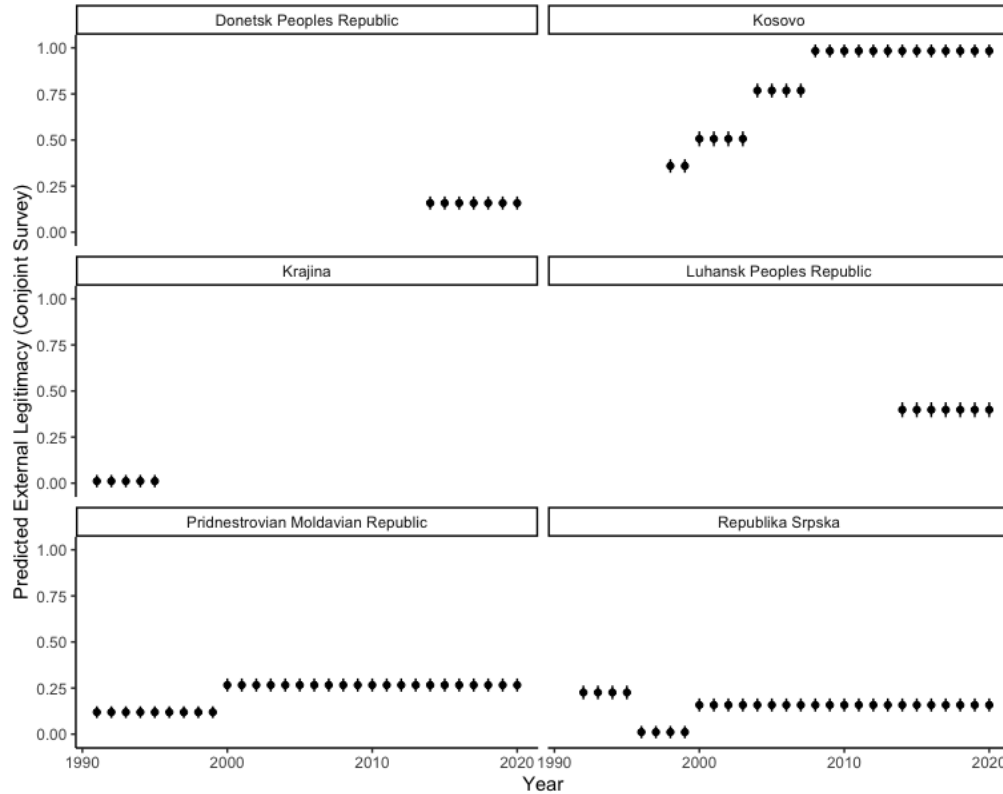
Point estimates represent the mean value. Lines denote 95% percent confidence intervals.

Figure 5: Latent External Legitimacy - Europe



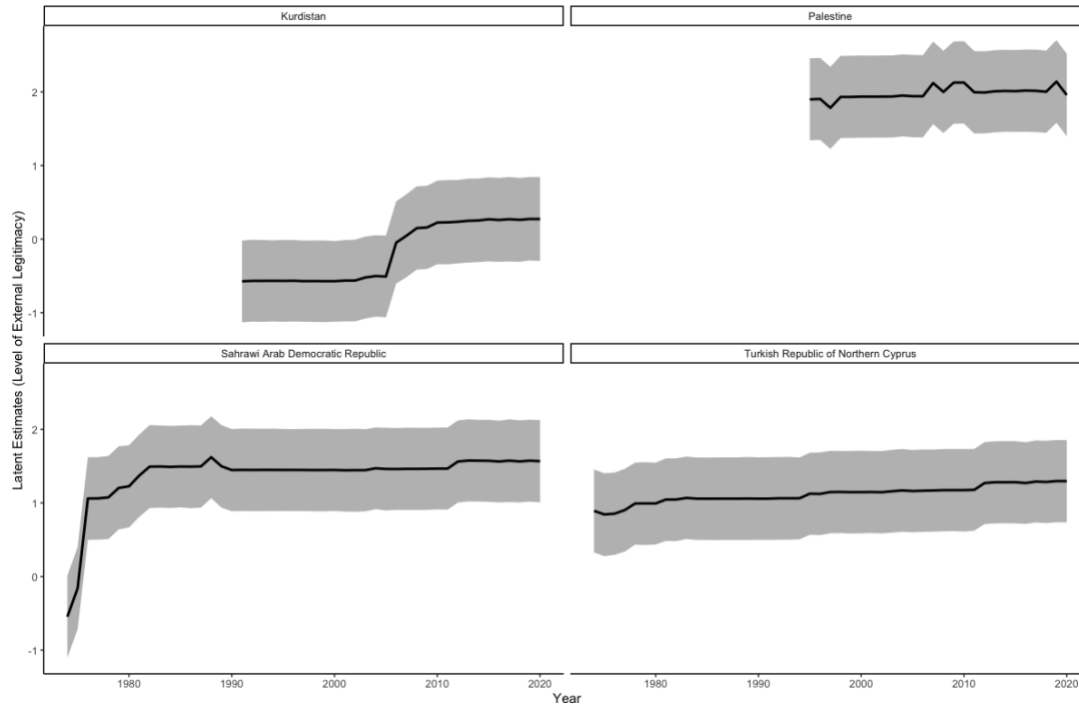
Point estimates represent the median value from the posterior distribution of latent estimates. Shaded regions denote 95% percent credible intervals.

Figure 6: Predicted External Legitimacy – Europe



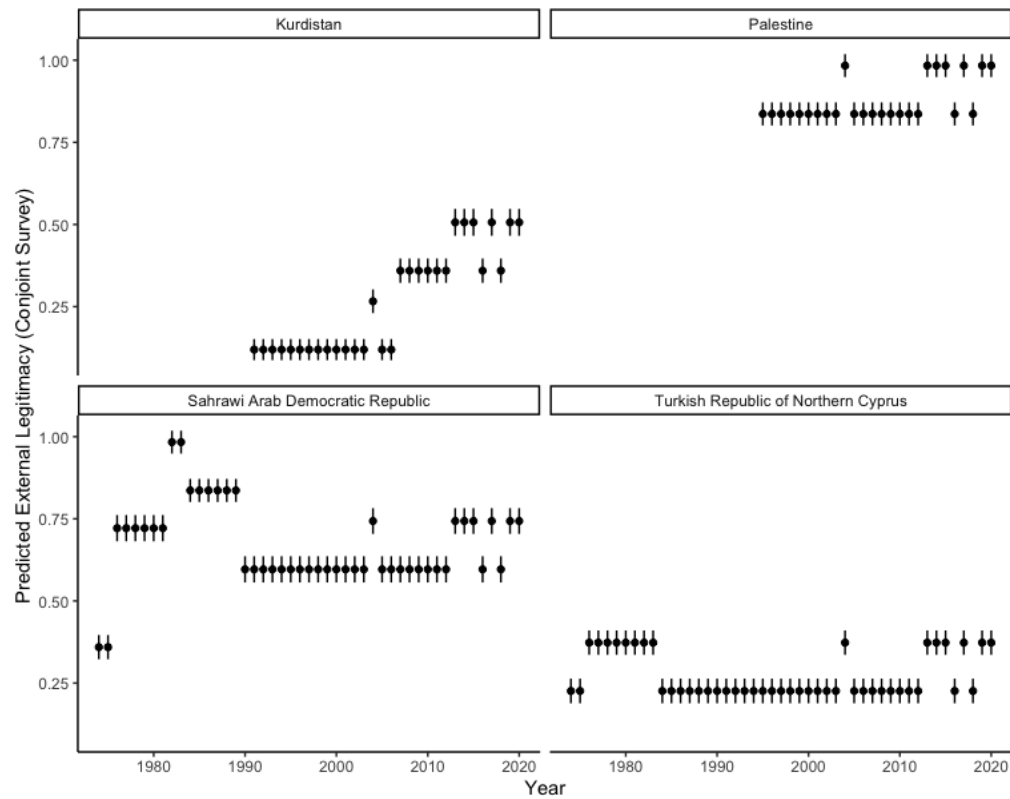
Point estimates represent the mean value. Lines denote 95% percent confidence intervals.

Figure 7: Latent External Legitimacy - Middle East and North Africa



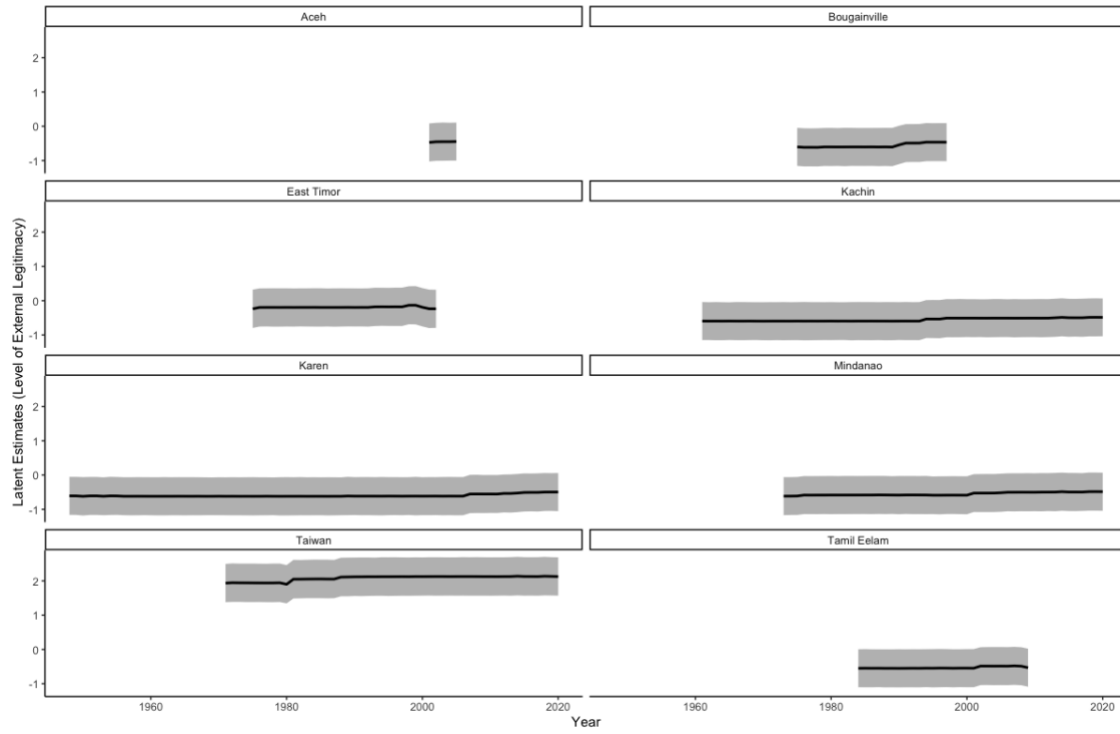
Point estimates represent the median value from the posterior distribution of latent estimates. Shaded regions denote 95% percent credible intervals.

Figure 8: Predicted External Legitimacy - Middle East and North Africa



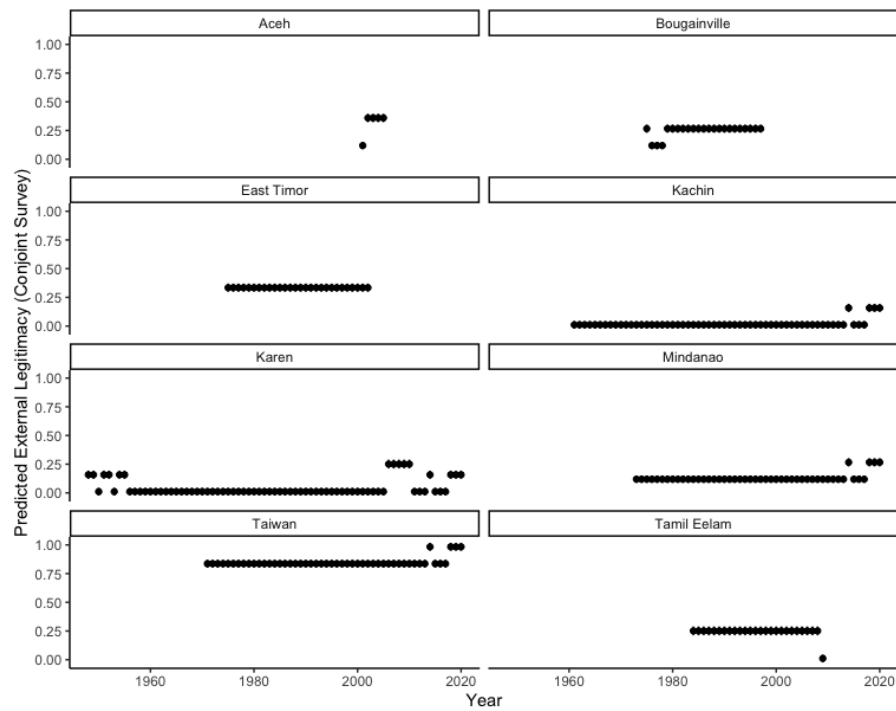
Point estimates represent the mean value. Lines denote 95% percent confidence intervals.

Figure 9: Latent External Legitimacy – Southeast Asia and Oceania



Point estimates represent the median value from the posterior distribution of latent estimates. Shaded regions denote 95% percent credible intervals.

Figure 10: Latent External Legitimacy – Southeast Asia and Oceania



Point estimates represent the mean value. Lines denote 95% percent confidence intervals.

Appendix D: Ethics Forms

Registration Plan: Conjoint Survey

Do Diplomats and Experts Think Differently About the Causes of External Legitimacy? De Facto States and the Politics of Recognition.

Description

The goal of the study is to determine the attributes that experts of statehood and recognition and diplomats in regional organizations believe to be important relating to the de facto state's external legitimacy. In particular, I am interested in how different levels of the six attributes effect how much external legitimacy the respondents would grant the hypothetical countries.

Hypotheses

This project is centred around two questions: what attributes affect external legitimacy; how do the preferences of experts of statehood and diplomats in regional organizations descriptively compare? These hypotheses are based on existing scholarly literature that discusses recognition and statehood rather than external legitimacy, which is a novel concept. Second, there is little scholarship on the perceptions of diplomats. Therefore, at some points, I situate hypotheses around the literature on regional organization positions as a whole. Last, some hypotheses are completely new as this line of inquiry is novel.

I hypothesize six attribute levels that positively affect a de facto states external legitimacy.

H1: Being recognized by one or more UN member states increases the probability of a country having a higher level of external legitimacy.

(Oppenheim, 1905; Kelsen, 1941; Chen 1951; Crawford 2007; Ryngaert & Sobrie, 2011; Vidmar 2012; Coggins 2016; Griffiths, 2016).

H2: The de facto state government having control over all areas within their borders increases the probability of a country having a higher level of external legitimacy.

(Brierly 1963; Crawford 1979; Talmon, 2005; Vioska & Newman, 2020)

H3: Being supported by a Great Power increases the probability of a country having a higher level of external legitimacy.

(Coggins, 2016)

H4: Being a democracy increases the probability of a country having a higher level of external legitimacy.

(Grant, 1999; Caspersen, 2012; Voller 2013; Vioska & Newman, 2020)

H5: Having no other secessionist movements in the same region as the de facto state increases the probability of a country having a higher level of external legitimacy.

(Horowitz, 1985; Gurr, 2000; Toft, 2003; Walters, 2006, Cunningham, 2011)

H6: Being a member of international organizations (Not the UN) increases the probability of a country having a higher level of external legitimacy.

(Hillgruber, 1998)

I also hypothesize about how the effect of the attributes will be different across the subgroups.

H7: The effect of recognition by one or more UN member states will be different across experts and diplomats in the survey.

H8: Respondents from the West are more likely to attribute higher value to democracy in assessing the external legitimacy of de facto states.

H9: Academics are more likely to attribute higher value to support from Great Powers in assessing the external legitimacy of de facto states.

Study design

Experiment - A researcher randomly assigns treatments to study subjects, this includes field or lab experiments. This is also known as an intervention experiment and includes randomized controlled trials.

I use a fully randomized conjoint analysis. The respondents will be presented with 15 pairwise conjoint tables. Within each conjoint table there will be a random combination of attributes that form two hypothetical de facto states. Following the table, there are questions that would identify their preferences about the two hypothetical de facto states. This conjoint experiment will capture the attributes that causally increase and decrease de facto states' perceived external legitimacy.

Randomization

I will randomize the two levels of each of the six attributes. In the Qualtrics survey each respondent will evaluate fifteen conjoint tables in the form of two hypothetical de facto state country profiles. Each are drawn from a dataset that have every single combination of the six attributes and their two levels.

Data Collection Procedures

Participants will be English-speaking adults who are, diplomats in regional organizations and experts of statehood and recognition. In selecting diplomats I will rely on the Relative Power

data https://www.ifs.du.edu/IFs/frm_PackagedDisplaysFlex.aspx. This will allow me to assess the most powerful countries in each region of the world and select diplomats in regional organizations from those states. I will add ten countries at time until I reach my desired sample size or have exhausted all the countries. I will contact these individuals using publicly available information. Ideally, I am hoping to get diplomats from: African Union (AU), Council of Europe (COE), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), European Union (EU), League of Arab States (LAS), Pacific Islands Forum, Organization of American States (OAS), Arab League, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), North American Treaty Organization (NATO).

For identifying experts, I will email everyone who has written on the subject (statehood, secession, recognition, sovereignty, and any type of states - pseudo, quasi, unrecognized, de facto) in the past fifteen years based on a search of JSTOR's Political Science and International Relations journals. I anticipate this to be around 150 people. I will contact these individuals using publicly available information.

Manipulated variables

I will manipulate all six attributes. The two levels of each binary attribute are:

Attribute	Attribute Levels
Recognition	Recognized by one or more UN member states, not recognized by any UN member states
Territory	Reclaiming former territory, not reclaiming former territory
Secessionist Movements in Region	No other secessionist movements are in the same region as the de facto state, Other secessionist movements are in the same region as the de facto state
Great Power Relationship	Support from a Great Power, No support from a Great power
Regime Type	Democracy, Non-democracy
IO Membership	Membership, Non-membership.

Measured variables

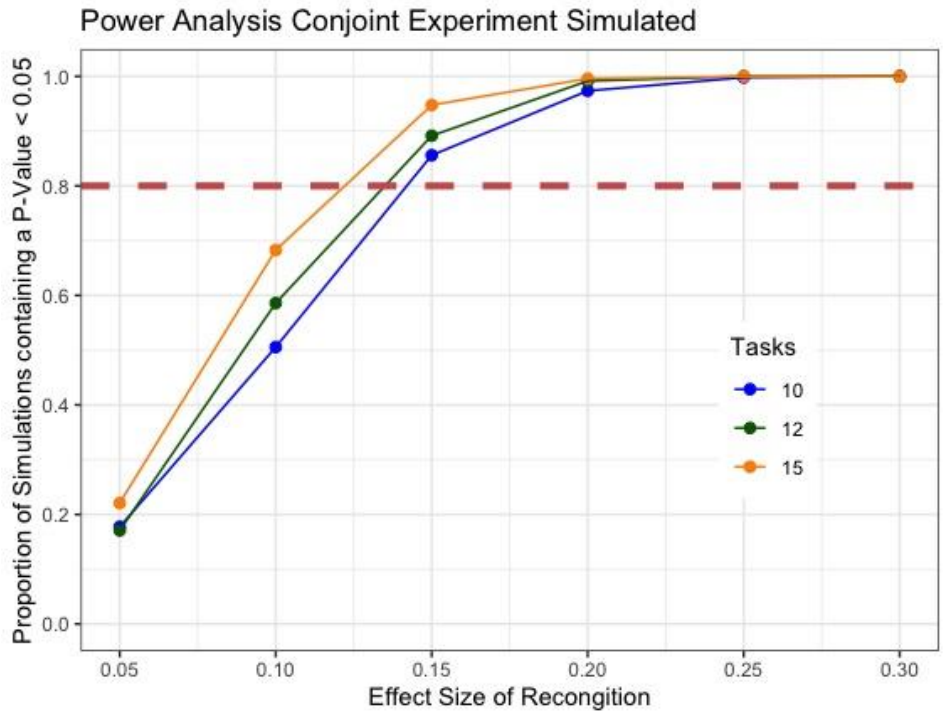
The outcome variable is external legitimacy. I capture this by presenting the fifteen pairwise profiles then asking respondents “What country profile would you say has more external legitimacy?” Second, I get them to rank each profile by asking “On a 1–7-point scale with 1 being no external legitimacy and 7 being the maximum amount of external legitimacy, where would you place Country _?”

Statistical models

I will estimate the Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCE). This will represent the causal effect of one of the profile attributes while averaging over the other five attributes. For each attribute I omit one of the values to use it as the baseline category. I will also be looking at the sub-group differences as identifying in hypothesis 7 to 9. I will also explore the existence of interaction effects in an exploratory manner, rather than relating them to specific hypothesis.

Other

I used simulated data to see the probability of the individual attribute of recognition being statistically significant across different effect sizes and number of tasks. I held the sample size and residual standard error constant at 150 respondents and 1. Based on this simulation I decided to use 15 tasks as it appears to be the best chance at reaching the 0.8 threshold across the effect sizes.



Letter of Information: Interviews (Virtual)



Letter of Information

Project Title:

Shouting in the Dark: A Reassessment of the Role of De Facto States in the International System

Document Title:

Letter of Information – Interview Participant

Principal Investigator

Dave Armstrong

PhD Student

Megan Payler
PhD Candidate

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a study on the domestic and international politics of non-UN member states.

This study attempts to develop a more comprehensive understanding and measure of the internal stability and external legitimacy of these countries.

Based on primary documents, you have been identified as a government or an elected official for a non-UN member state. Would you be willing to speak to me on the telephone or on Zoom about your experiences at a time of your choosing? The interview would last between 30 and 60 minutes depending on the time you have available.

Why is this study being done?

Being a member of the United Nations (UN) represents one of the most powerful sources of status for countries as it signifies membership in the international community of states. The international community of states offers several benefits, including legitimacy, decision-making power in international bodies, economic assistance, and physical security. The process of a new country becoming a UN member is ever evolving and, since 1945, already-recognized UN state members have acted as gatekeepers to limit membership in the international community in various ways. As a result of these barriers, “de facto states” have emerged. These states are unrecognized by the UN yet control territory, develop their own institutions, and have bilateral and multilateral engagements with other states. While they resemble a state, they lack UN membership which serves as international legal protection. This study is attempting to understand how de facto states operate and survive in an international system that does not fully recognize their existence. This study helps uncover the strategies de facto states employ to survive and also the avenues in which they may try utilizing to seek greater recognition. In addition, it will generate insights to into how the international community more broadly perceives de facto states.

How long will you be in this study?

Study participation is limited to a short 30-60 minute interview. Participant time will be limited to the time they spend engaging with study investigators.

What are the study procedures?

If you agree to participate, we will arrange a Zoom or telephone interview at a time of your choosing. The interview will last between 30 and 60 minutes based on the time you have available and will include open-ended questions based on your knowledge and experience. An audio recording will be made of the interview, and we will take written

notes. If you would prefer not to be recorded, you are free to indicate this preference and no audio recordings will be made and only handwritten notes will be taken.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you would be free to not answer any questions, to end the interview at any time. You may choose to not be identified in the dissemination of this research (both as an individual and organization). If you give consent to be identified, information obtained in the interview, including direct quotations, may appear in conference papers and presentations, scholarly journal articles, scholarly books and/or other written publications. You also have the right to have any information given during the interview redacted up to one month after the interview by indicating so in an email. If we use a direct quotation or identifying information in a publication, we will contact you via email. Following this you will have one week to edit or redact the relevant aspects of the research project.

What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?

Possible harm might be if a participant accidentally gave confidential and/or politically sensitive information during the interview. There is a risk of privacy breach as we are collecting identifiable information.

At the start of the interview, you will be reminded that participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you would be free to not answer any questions, to end the interview at any time, or to remain unidentified in the results of the study. You will also be reminded that you have the right to have any information given during the interview not used in the study up to one month after the interview.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

No direct benefits. You may not directly benefit from participating in this study, but information gathered may provide benefits to society as a whole, including enhanced knowledge of international public policy processes.

Can participants choose to leave the study?

Yes. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to have any information given during the interview not used in the study up to one month after the interview. If

you wish to have your information removed, please let the researcher know. We will provide you with any new information that may affect your decision to stay in the study.

How will participants' information be kept confidential?

This study may use personal quotes, titles, names, or other identifying information within the publication unless the participant wishes to remain anonymous, in which case, any quotes will not be directly attributed. If you have requested that your name and/or organization, be kept confidential, they will not appear in any dissemination of the research.

Participant's information will be kept confidential using a four-digit identification number. If you agree to participate, and an interview is set up you will be added to an excel file. This excel file will have your name, job title, organization, email and a corresponding four-digit identification number. It will be saved on the Western University institutional OneDrive. All files associated with each participant (interview notes and audio recordings) will only have the four-digit identification number and no other identifying information. This information will be destroyed after seven years.

The information collected as part of this study may also be used as part of future research projects. In doing so, your decision regarding anonymity will still be adhered to. Additionally, you may choose to not have your information used in future research projects.

Are participants compensated to be in this study?

No.

What are the rights of participants?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your personal or professional well-being. You do not waive any legal right by consenting to this study.

Whom do participants contact for questions?

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact the Principal Investigator:

Principal Investigator

Dave Armstrong
Department of Political Science
Western University
Social Sciences Building
London, ON, Canada, N6A 5C2

You may also contact the PhD student:

PhD Student

Megan Payler
PhD Candidate
Department of Political Science
Western University
Social Sciences Building
London, ON, Canada, N6A 5C2

Consent

Participation in this interview is indication of your consent to participate. Verbal consent will be obtained at the start of the interview related to the use of audio recording; the citation of direct quotes; and the use (or not) of your name, title and organization in any dissemination of the research.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Letter of Information: Interviews (Kosovo, Prishtina)



Letter of Information

Project Title:

Shouting in the Dark: A Reassessment of the Role of De Facto States in the International System

Document Title:

Letter of Information – Interview Participant

Principal Investigator

Dave Armstrong
Department of Political Science

PhD Student

Megan Payler
PhD Candidate

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a study on the domestic and international politics of non-UN member states.

This study attempts to develop a more comprehensive understanding and measure of the internal stability and external legitimacy of these countries.

Based on primary documents, you have been identified as a government or an elected official for a non-UN member state. Would you be willing to speak to in-person about your experiences at a mutually agreed upon time and location in Pristina the week of February 16th-February 24th, 2023? The interview would last between 30 and 60 minutes depending on the time you have available.

Why is this study being done?

Being a member of the United Nations (UN) represents one of the most powerful sources of status for countries as it signifies membership in the international community of states. The international community of states offers several benefits, including legitimacy, decision-making power in international bodies, economic assistance, and physical security. The process of a new country becoming a UN member is ever evolving and, since 1945, already-recognized UN state members have acted as gatekeepers to limit membership in the international community in various ways. As a result of these barriers, “de facto states” have emerged. These states are unrecognized by the UN yet control territory, develop their own institutions, and have bilateral and multilateral engagements with other states. While they resemble a state, they lack UN membership which serves as international legal protection. This study is attempting to understand how de facto states operate and survive in an international system that does not fully recognize their existence. This study helps uncover the strategies de facto states employ to survive and also the avenues in which they may try utilizing to seek greater recognition. In addition, it will generate insights to into how the international community more broadly perceives de facto states.

How long will you be in this study?

Study participation is limited to a short 30-60 minute interview. Participant time will be limited to the time they spend engaging with study investigators.

What are the study procedures?

If you agree to participate, we will arrange an in-person interview at a time and location of your choosing in Pristina in the week of February 16th – February 24th, 2023. The interview will last between 30 and 60 minutes based on the time you have available and will include open-ended questions based on your knowledge and experience. An audio

recording will be made of the interview, and we will take written notes. Recording's will be collected via Megan Payler's iPhone in Airplane Mode, with WIFI disabled. If you would prefer not to be recorded, you are free to indicate this preference and no audio recordings will be made and only handwritten notes will be taken.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you would be free to not answer any questions, to end the interview at any time. You may choose to not be identified in the dissemination of this research (both as an individual and organization). If you give consent to be identified, information obtained in the interview, including direct quotations, may appear in conference papers and presentations, scholarly journal articles, scholarly books and/or other written publications. If we use a direct quotation or identifying information in a publication, we will contact you via email. Following this you will have one week to edit or redact the relevant aspects of the research project.

What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?

Possible harm might be if a participant accidentally gave confidential and/or politically sensitive information during the interview. There is a risk of privacy breach as we are collecting identifiable information.

At the start of the interview, you will be reminded that participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you would be free to not answer any questions, to end the interview at any time, or to remain unidentified in the results of the study. You will also be reminded that you have the right to have any information given during the interview not used in the study up to one month after the interview.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

No direct benefits. You may not directly benefit from participating in this study, but information gathered may provide benefits to society as a whole, including enhanced knowledge of international public policy processes.

Can participants choose to leave the study?

Yes. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to have any information given during the interview not used in the study up to one month after the interview. If you wish to have your information removed, please let the researcher know. We will provide you with any new information that may affect your decision to stay in the study.

How will participants' information be kept confidential?

This study may use personal quotes, titles, names, or other identifying information within the publication unless the participant wishes to remain anonymous, in which case, any quotes will not be directly attributed. If you have requested that your name and/or organization, be kept confidential, they will not appear in any dissemination of the research.

Participant's information will be kept confidential using a four-digit identification number. If you agree to participate, and an interview is set up you will be added to an excel file. This excel file will have your name, job title, organization, email and a corresponding four-digit identification number. It will be saved on the Western University institutional OneDrive. All files associated with each participant (interview notes and audio recordings) will only have the four-digit identification number and no other identifying information. Recording's will be collected via Megan Payler's iPhone in Airplane Mode, with WIFI disabled. Once the interview is complete, the audio files will be uploaded to the Western University institutional OneDrive. This information will be destroyed after seven years.

The information collected as part of this study may also be used as part of future research projects. In doing so, your decision regarding anonymity will still be adhered to. Additionally, you may choose to not have your information used in future research projects.

Are participants compensated to be in this study?

No.

What are the rights of participants?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to

withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your personal or professional well-being. You do not waive any legal right by consenting to this study.

Whom do participants contact for questions?

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact the Principal Investigator:

Principal Investigator

Dave Armstrong
Department of Political Science

You may also contact the PhD student:

PhD Student

Megan Payler
PhD Candidate

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Consent In-Person (Kosovo, Prishtina)

Participant Consent

I consent to participate in the interview with the following conditions:

Audio recording: Yes ___ No ___

Personal Identification: By Name _____ By Title _____ Anonymously _____

Organization Identification: Yes ___ No ___

Name (Printed): _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Interviewee Consent

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

Name (Printed): _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Interview Guide

Interview Script/Questions: Shouting in the Dark: A Reassessment of the Role of De Facto States in the International System

Interview Code: FI01

RQ: How do de facto states balance the drive for external legitimacy with their need to sustain themselves?

Preamble: I want to provide a reminder that the audio-recording will begin and that questions can be skipped by saying pass.

Interview Questions

How important is it for your country to be considered by international organizations and other states as a legitimate and sovereign state?

What factors do you believe to be most important for increasing a non-UN members legitimacy?

What efforts, if any, has your country taken to increase the way in which it is externally perceived by the international community?

Has your country made any efforts to adhere to international norms, such as the protection of human rights and/or democratization?

Which UN members do you think are most influential in deciding who is granted UN membership?

Has your country taken any actions to establish relations with these countries?

What steps does your government take to maintain its internal legitimacy within your state?

What steps does your government take to maintain control over its territory?

Since its independence, what are some of the most important actions that your country has taken to build up its state infrastructure?

How do you think non-UN membership has affected the functioning of your country internally?

How do you think non-UN membership has affected the interactions of your country externally?

Do you think that your government sometimes has to prioritize domestic stability and the maintenance of power within your territory over greater external legitimacy?

How does non-UN membership affect decisions your government makes both internally and externally?

What are the most important short-term goals of your country?

What are the most important long-term goals of your country?

Do the short and long-term goals ever conflict with one another?

Do you think non-UN membership creates trade-offs between the external and internal goals of your country?



Western Research

Date: 25 February 2022

To: Dr. David Armstrong

Project ID: 120005

Study Title: Shouting in the Dark: A Reassessment of De Facto States in the International System

Short Title: Shouting in the Dark

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: March 4 2022

Date Approval Issued: 25/Feb/2022 00:27

REB Approval Expiry Date: 25/Feb/2023

Dear Dr. David Armstrong

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. **All other required institutional approvals and mandated training must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.**

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Interview-Reminder	Recruitment Materials	25/Nov/2021	1
Email Script for Recruitment-Interview	Recruitment Materials	25/Nov/2021	1
Shouting in the Dark - Registration Plan	Protocol	26/Nov/2021	1
Interview Script-Shouting in the Dark	Interview Guide	04/Feb/2022	2
External Legitimacy and De Facto States Survey	Online Survey	04/Feb/2022	2
Verbal Consent-Shouting in the Dark	Verbal Consent/Assent	04/Feb/2022	2
Survey email and Letter of Information	Implied Consent/Assent	04/Feb/2022	2
Letter of Information- Shouting in the Dark.Interviews	Verbal Consent/Assent	04/Feb/2022	2
Survey email and Letter of Information	Recruitment Materials	04/Feb/2022	2
Reminder Survey email and Letter of Information	Recruitment Materials	04/Feb/2022	2

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson , Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Curriculum Vitae

Megan Payler

Education

The University of Western Ontario

Ph.D. Political Science

August 2023 (Expected)

Queens University

M.A. Political Science

2018

University of Guelph

B.A. Political Science

2016

Research and Teaching Interests

Research: De Facto States; Informal IR; Legitimacy; Intra-state conflict; Conflict management; Measurement and scaling

Teaching: International relations; Global Politics; International Law; Comparative Politics; Politics of the Global South; Development; Intra-state conflict; Qualitative and quantitative research methods

Publications

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

Tieku, Thomas, and Megan Payler. From Subsidiarity Principle to the Chambo Formulae: Conceptualizing Cooperation between the UN and Regional Organizations in Mediating Conflicts. *International Negotiation: A Journal of Theory and Practice*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718069-bja10040>

Current Research

Manuscripts Submitted for Review

Payler, Megan. "Shouting in the Dark? Introducing the External Legitimacy Dataset."

Girard, Tyler, Nicole McMahon, and Megan Payler. "Theorizing Norm Stagnation: Evidence from the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Equality and Gender Equality Norms."

Issa, Abdiasis and Megan Payler. "(Dis)congruencies in Regional and International Organization Responses to Secessionist Movements: Evidence from Somaliland and South Sudan."

Payler, Megan, Cynthia Huo, Cameron Anderson, Nandita Biswas Mellamphy and Chris Alcantara. "Is there a Gender Gap in the Canadian Journal of Political Science?"

Alcantara, Chris, Allison Harell, Megan Payler and Laura Stephenson. “Scaling Indigenous Resentment and Reconciliation in Canada.”

Grants & Scholarships

External

Ontario Provincial Government 2021-2022
Ontario Graduate Scholarship (\$15,000 CAD)

Ontario Provincial Government 2020-2021
Ontario Graduate Scholarship (\$15,000 CAD)

Internal

The University of Western Ontario 2022-2023
Political Science Doctoral Completion Scholarship (\$24,337 CAD)

The University of Western Ontario 2022
Research, Training and Development fund (\$2472 CAD)

The University of Western Ontario 2022
Social Science Graduate Alumni Award (\$3000 CAD)

Presentations

Invited Speaker

“The External Legitimacy of De Facto States: A Conjoint Survey Design.” Research Methods in Political Science, (3rd Year Undergraduate Course), Kings University College. 2021.

“Stalling Secession: Somaliland in (Post)colonial Times.” International Relations (2nd Year Undergraduate Course), Department of Political Science, The University of Western Ontario. 2019.

Workshops

“Measurement and Dimensional Analysis.” The University of Western Ontario Research Methods Workshop Series for Graduate Students, Department of Political Science, The University of Western Ontario. 2020.

Conferences

* denotes cancellation due to COVID-19

MapleMeth Regional Methodology Conference (London, Canada) 2022

International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Conference 2020*, 2021, 2022

Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) Annual Conference 2020*, 2021

Advanced Methods Training

ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods of Social Research

Measurement, Scaling, and Dimensional Analysis; Regression Analysis II, Bayesian Modeling for the Social Sciences I 2020

Teaching

Instructor of Record

The University of Western Ontario
Secession and Ethnic Conflict, 4th Year Undergraduate Winter 2023

King's University College
Developing Countries in Global Politics, 2nd Year Undergraduate Winter 2022

Teaching Assistant

The University of Western Ontario
Developing Countries in Global Politics, 2nd Year Undergraduate 2020-2021

The University of Western Ontario
International Relations, 2nd Year Undergraduate 2018-2020

Queens University
International Relations, 1st Year Undergraduate 2017-2018

Field Experience

Kosovo

Elite Interviews February 2023

Service

The University of Western Ontario (Department)

Executive, Graduate Association for Political Science 2018-2022

The Discipline

Editorial Assistant
Canadian Journal of Political Science 2020-2023

Professional Affiliations

Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA)
International Studies Association (ISA)
American Political Science Association (APSA)
British International Studies Association (BISA)
Women in Conflict Studies Network (WICS)