

Over-Stating the Unrecognised State?
**Reconsidering De Facto Independent Entities in the
International System**

James C. Harvey

University of Exeter

2010

Over-Stating the Unrecognised State?
**Reconsidering De Facto Independent Entities in the
International System**

Submitted by James C. Harvey to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Ethno-Politics, (Date)

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material
and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and
that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by
this or any other University.

..... (Signature)

Abstract

This thesis reconsiders the theoretical and conceptual parameters of unrecognised entities and *de facto* independent territories which endure non-recognition and lack formal sovereignty in international law. These entities are traditionally assumed to represent “unrecognised states” and “*de facto* states” which endure in the international and interstate systems despite lacking legal recognition of their sovereignty. The following study examines anomalous conceptual features emerging from definitions, theories, frameworks, and discourses which situate these territorial entities alongside sovereign states in the international system. It challenges the equivalence with statehood which currently dominates mainstream thinking and assesses whether the concept of secession is still the most appropriate explanatory and causal dynamic in the emergence of unrecognised entities.

The study engages with problematic areas of theoretical and conceptual discourse applied to unrecognised state-like entities. It examines how the case of Iraqi Kurdistan (as a *de facto* independent entity in the international system) deviates from long-standing assumptions on “unrecognised statehood” and existing conceptual frameworks designed for entities in different regional contexts. The discussion questions the appropriateness of using the unitary state as a theoretical reference point through which to understand ambiguous political systems of this type. The political and theoretical spaces occupied by these entities are examined not only in terms of international relations theory but also critical thinking on the production of power, ideology, and sovereignty. The discussion induces tensions into debates surrounding unrecognised states by arguing that it is inherently difficult to advance inquiry into unrecognised entities from a point of departure on sovereignty which is already embedded in state-centrism. The discussion examines how existing frameworks and approaches are open to critical revision and how the generalised assumptions of a small body of literature continue to circumscribe debates over unrecognised entities in academic analysis. The study frames the issue of *de facto* independent territories against a critical examination of approaches to sovereignty, secession, and the state. It also proposes an examination of these anomalous entities as *Paretian systems* – a theoretical perspective as yet unexplored within the field of study.

Acknowledgements

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my supervisor Professor Gareth Stansfield for his advice, support, guidance and constructive criticism; all of which have proved invaluable to both this project and my own intellectual evolution as a researcher and academic. I have greatly appreciated and benefited from his insights and direction, in particular those emerging from my conversations with him on the Kurdistan region of Iraq and other aspects of Middle East Politics. I would also like to thank him for indulging some of the more abstract facets of my research and for this I am highly indebted.

This thesis was written whilst holding a research award from The Leverhulme Trust at the Exeter Centre for Ethno-Political Studies (EXCEPS). Among my colleagues there I am indebted to Dr Hashem Ahmadzadeh for providing me with additional inspiration, encouragement and his influence in deepening my understanding of Kurdish culture, identity and politics. I am also grateful to Dr Nina Caspersen for her direction and assistance in the initial stages of my research into unrecognised states.

I would also like to give special thanks to all the friends and colleagues with whom I have discussed my research as well as those whose administrative support has been invaluable in facilitating this project; to Klejda Mulaj, Clemence Scalbert-Yucel, Lise Storm, Hamit Bozarslan, Tim Niblock, Gerd Nonneman, James Onley, Ahmed Abu-Zayed, Nicu Popescu, Hannes Artens; and to Jane Clark, Laura Newberry and Sarmi Ghosh without whose assistance this project would not have been possible.

Last, but not least, I thank my family and friends for their unwavering support throughout my research. In particular I wish to thank my tutors from Ruskin College Oxford, Hilda Kean and Stephen Howe, for starting me off on this journey.

This work is dedicated to the memory of AH, CRMB and PWL who sadly were unable to see its completion.

Table of Contents

Over-Stating the Unrecognised State? Reconsidering De Facto Independent Entities in the International System	1
Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
Table of Contents	4
List of Abbreviations	6
1. Introduction	7
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Significance of the Study	11
Literature Review.....	17
Theoretical Framework.....	29
Methodology	46
Note on Definitions.....	53
2. Unrecognised Entities as Analytical Concepts: Problems in International Relations and Political Science Approaches	54
Precipitation of the Problem in Conceptual Literature	54
Reformulating Mainstream Discourse	57
Escaping the “Prison House” of International Relations	61
Rethinking the Ontology of Unrecognised Entities	67
Ethno-Political Dynamics and Concepts	74
Conclusion	77
3. Iraqi Kurdistan: Perspectives on Status and Political Change Since 1991	80
Perspectives on Status.....	80
Perspectives on Internal Politics	87
Conclusion	93
4. Challenging the Fiction of “Stateness” in Academic Discourse on Unrecognised Entities	95
In Iraq, In Kurdistan: A Typology of Symbolic Order	95
The Unrecognised Entity as Ideological Object.....	101
Asymmetries of Power and Ideological Development	106
The Empty Gesture	121
Conclusion	126
5. Economic Liberalisation in Iraqi Kurdistan	129
Economic Liberalisation in Historical Context.....	131
Socio-Economic Constraints.....	143
The Poison Chalice of Marketisation.....	147
Conclusion	151

6. Sovereignty, Secession and the Question of “Stateness” in Unrecognised Entities	155
Positioning the Object.....	157
Secession’s Conceptual Complexity within the Study of Unrecognised Entities...	164
Distinguishing Partition and Secession.....	166
Beyond Gestalt.....	173
Centrally Propelled Secession: A model for Iraq?.....	178
Conclusion	187
7. The End of “De Facto States”? Toward An Alternative Model for Research into Unrecognised Entities	191
The End of “De Facto States”	191
De Facto Independence as an Expedient Political Methodology.....	195
Spatial Implications of De Facto Independence: Theoretical Issues	213
Is There a New Theoretical Approach?	221
Conclusion	224
8. Conclusions	228
Appendices	235
Bibliography	237
Websites and Selected Electronic Resources	244

List of Abbreviations

ECFR	European Council on Foreign Relations
EU	European Union
IJMES	International Journal of Middle East Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMK	Islamic Movement in Kurdistan
IR	International Relations
ISA	Ideological State Apparatus
KDC	Kurdistan Development Corporation
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KNA	Kurdistan National Assembly
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers)
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
TAL	Transitional Administrative Law
TMR	Trans-Dniester Moldovan Republic
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UN	United Nations
UNPO	Unrecognised Nations and Peoples Organisation
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US / USA	United States of America

1. Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Unrecognised entities continue to capture the attention of political science and international relations theorists as many fundamental assumptions regarding sovereignty, legitimacy, and the physics of statehood are challenged by the presence of these conceptually abstract modes of political organisation in the international system. Our understanding of these ambiguous ‘state-like’ entities (often termed *de facto states* or *quasi-states* in other literature), whilst having advanced considerably in the decades since the break-up of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, remains limited and theoretically underdeveloped. The field of post-Soviet studies was among the first to draw on the extremely limited pool of academic analysis into unrecognised entities which analysed, as their primary empirical focus, territorial disputes and conflicts in the Western Sahara, Sub-Saharan Africa, Cyprus, and Taiwan.¹ Analysis was often located firmly within comparative empirical methodologies and state-centric perspectives, the formation of which was influenced strongly by post-Cold War strategic viewpoints and geopolitics. With the end of the Cold War, international relations and regional specialists examining the emergence of territorial disputes and conflicts in Eurasia and the Caucasus were left with the task of creating new frameworks and theoretical models to explain the nature and position of unrecognised entities in the international system. The results were mixed.

¹ Robert Jackson’s *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) occupies a central position in the study of unrecognised entities as his definition of the *quasi-state*, a state which possesses formal recognition but is otherwise poorly functioning, was juxtaposed by scholars like Pegg who, in the 1990s, refigured Jackson’s assumptions to create a theoretical space for the concept of the *de facto state* to occupy. Since the publication of Jackson’s work, scholars such as Pal Kolstø have rehabilitated the use of the term *quasi-state* and have broadened the applicability of Jackson’s definition in the case of unrecognised entities in the Caucasus and Eurasia. The terminology used to describe and quantify unrecognised entities is largely one of personal preference rather than academic convention as the morphology of terms used is marked by continual dispute and revision.

During the 1990s theoretical problems associated with unrecognised entities began to be addressed for the first time within frameworks which took into account the end of the Cold War, the unfolding collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as the need for international society to take note of the security problem of unrecognised entities emerging from regional disputes and conflicts. However, this new wave of analysis was not a radical step forward in terms of advancing the broader theoretical appreciation of the many challenges presented by unrecognised entities. Due to the fringe nature of inquiry into the subject, much of the scholarship which emerged was firmly rooted in established international relations/politics epistemologies which, in turn, created space for the convenient re-articulation of traditional state-centric tropes and palliatives associated with realist and structuralist approaches forged and institutionalised during the preceding Cold War era. The uncritical analytical frameworks which emerged out of 1990s scholarship on unrecognised entities were not widely contested at the time and as a result continue to exert a considerable positivist influence over the study of these ambiguous political formations. Despite the readily identifiable gaps and limitations which call for new theoretical research to advance our understanding of unrecognised entities and the theoretical space they inhabit, new theoretical positions on the subject have not been forthcoming. Research conducted during the 1990s, when framed against the political contexts against which it was applied, was an effective yet pragmatic attempt by political scientists and international relations specialists to solve a specific set of political problems which, at that time, were not the subject of significant academic engagement. The problem with this research, and its normative encoding of politics surrounding *de facto* independence, is that its main contribution was the incorporation of unrecognised entities into existing frameworks rather than attempting the creation of a new field of theoretical discourse and new analytical frameworks.

This thesis acknowledges, incorporates and analyses a diverse range of approaches to the rethinking of political space; including the contributions of post-modern critical thinkers and the post-structuralist, deconstructionist, postcolonial, and psychoanalytic approaches developed for redefining and rearticulating discourses on political mobilisation and their many conjectures. Many of these approaches have so far remained controversial and perhaps taboo in the fields of international relations,

international politics, and political science. Because of this problematic relationship and the fringe nature of the field of enquiry, many contributions to the rethinking of interstate dynamics and political mobilisation have not yet been mated with a significant discussion concerning unrecognised entities. In its critical and exploratory analysis of the Kurdish unrecognised entity in northern Iraq, this thesis aims to not only highlight the many areas in which contemporary theoretical discussions surrounding unrecognised 'states' have ignored the centrality of approaches which involve unsettling the view of the 'subject' of unrecognised entities; but also to put forward hypotheses based on theoretical questions which consider a reassessment of the unrecognised entity and its ambiguous legal and material status in international politics.

To develop the hypothesis that the unrecognised entity is not always a unitary actor or fixed cartographic entity which possesses the values of statehood so often used to describe these phenomena, it has been necessary to adopt a questioning and critical approach toward dominant mainstream academic analyses featuring these political units. The discussion attempts, from the outset, to recognise that unrecognised entities, as an analytical concept, challenge international politics theories and assumed contractual relationships between populations and states head-on through the subversion of the rules of statecraft at many significant levels, including the possible existence of an alternate paradigm for the social and political sciences to view international order. Therefore, the discussion which follows is intended to address and explore the subtleties of a rich issue which has been flattened, and its theoretical complexities left largely unexplored, by a great deal of the academic analysis which attempts to engage with and define its dynamics.

This thesis, as a critical study of unrecognised entities as theoretical objects and analytical concepts within political science and international relations research, highlights areas where both bias and generalisation surrounding *de jure* legitimacy has limited our theoretical understanding of these entities in an ethno-political context by favouring state-centric approaches. For a better conceptual understanding of the dynamics which surround these entities, this thesis focuses on the concept of the '*de facto* state' (as it has been applied in international relations, political science, security studies, and area studies

discourses) and looks critically at why, on a theoretical level, such a problematic and contradictory abstraction restricts our understanding of ambiguous situations of the type unfolding in Iraqi Kurdistan². Through its core hypotheses, the discussion contests the view of the ‘*de facto* state’ or ‘unrecognised state’ as a singular, fixed, coherent unit, defined through unchallengeable, rock-solid criteria; and instead posits the view that international relations and political science assumptions regarding unrecognised entities of this sort contain many problematic notions of sovereignty and unitary function which have roots in realist international relations dialectics and state-centric discourses (which also represent conjectural doctrines).

The hypotheses put forward are defended by bringing to the attention of the reader a broad range of abstract discussions including some which can be situated in critical international relations theory, recent debates surrounding globalisation, and new political science theories on secession, political mobilisation and ethno-politics. This rethinking of political space enables the creation of a theoretical approach which places realist and positivist assumptions on the nature of international political order in the presence of their critiques. By doing so, the arguments presented in this discussion highlight how international relations and other disciplinary offerings have denied and ‘de-worlded’ the complicated ethno-politics of unrecognised entities, isolating the field of study from contexts and scenarios which highlight conceptual alternatives and new analytical pathways to understanding the problem. The unrecognised state-like entity is, therefore, not depicted in this thesis as having a singular purpose, existence, or categorical meaning, but rather a fluid nature which is more often than not dictated by variables of geopolitical location, the localised interpretation of identity, sovereignty, historical experience, ethno-politics, and the contracts of political power which surround it.

² The term *Iraqi Kurdistan* is here used purely for the purposes of making a spatial distinction between the provinces of Iraq which are politically administrated by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and those which remain under the writ of the central government in Baghdad. The term is not used to infer any ethnic, demographic or political qualifications on the region, nor is it used to imply the existence of a contemporary or historic Kurdistan, or an ethno-political hegemony in the region.

Significance of the Study

The discussion contained within this thesis establishes the problematic nature of scholarship on unrecognised entities in the international system as well as asking how the unique political predicaments experienced by these state-like, autonomous entities shape and fashion their strategies and interactions with international society. In subsequent chapters the discussion looks at underlying theoretical questions (including questions surrounding the economic transition of Iraqi Kurdistan) which are important in political terms and have a significant bearing on the clarification of unrecognised entities as analytical concepts for theoretical research. An analytical approach is established which illustrates how the case of Iraqi Kurdistan – this thesis’ central case study - falls outside a number of key discursive parameters within the *de facto* states debate – a debate which runs through many examples of earlier scholarship examined in this thesis. This approach leads to the proposal of a hypothesis which questions the material qualifications used to define an ‘unrecognised state’, and how the qualifications adhered to by analysts are questionably suitable when applied in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan. This departure from the norms of existing theoretical definitions and assumptions questions the comparative generalisations made between *de jure* states and ambiguous political entities which are not states either in name or in function. As such, this thesis covers new theoretical ground and challenges a significant number of generalisations and assumptions taken for granted in a field of research which remains epistemologically fragmented.

Iraqi Kurdistan is the main case study of this thesis. The *de facto* independent Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq has experienced significant political, economic and infrastructural development and regeneration on a scale unmatched by many other disputed territories. The trajectory of its political and economic development, its longevity in the international system, and the region’s high level of *de facto* independence makes Iraqi Kurdistan an important addition to the study of unrecognised entities. Former militias and armed factions within the Kurdish enclave have opened themselves up to the reduction of political volatility in Iraq, both regionally and nationally, through mainstream participation in processes of governance and the creation

of a new body politic in Iraq itself. This is a profound re-articulation (or re-polarisation) of political space and symbolic order in Iraqi politics which, as we shall see, has implications for understanding both the unrecognised entity within Iraq's borders and those entities which also exist in Eurasia, the Caucasus, and the rest of the world. The autonomous Kurdistan region of northern Iraq which is currently experiencing autonomy and functional self-rule under the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is the primary case study against which the hypotheses presented in this thesis will be tested. Wider developments in the rest of Iraq and neighbouring states, although of intense supplemental relevance, play a contextual role that favours the construction of a more complete analytical discussion than one which would focus on intra-Kurdish developments within the unrecognised entity alone. A secondary analysis within this thesis is aimed at analysing and reconsidering the concepts of transition, ideology and symbolic order in ambiguous political entities, alongside questions which address the transformation of political space and civic nation formation experienced in the Kurdistan region since 1991.³

In the wake of the United States led war on Iraq in 2003, the absence of a strong and politically antagonistic central regime in Baghdad enabled Kurdish politicians and political parties to exert a profound influence on the future trajectory of Iraqi politics. With this new-found political and economic influence, however, comes the stark reality that the Kurdish controlled enclave in northern Iraq has only recently taken the first step in its transitional departure from being a crisis zone, reliant on external assistance for its survival (both politically and physically). As well as being internally divided and systematically underdeveloped (as a result of conflict, internal embargoes, external sanctions, and what many Kurds would see as decades of internal colonialism by successive Arab nationalist governments), Kurdistan's ideological landscape is still home to the politics of resistance, Kurdish nationalism, and ethno-political exception. In

³ 1991 is used here as a marker on the historical continuum of Kurdish politics as it was in this year that the military forces of Saddam Hussein's government withdrew from the majority of the three provinces which now make up Iraqi Kurdistan (Suleimanya, Erbil, Dohuk). The subsequent establishment of a United Nations protectorate or "Safe Haven" in northern Iraq, and the establishment of a "no-fly zone" over the territory, led to the development of substantial autonomy for political parties in the region as well as the formation of structures of civic governance. Such autonomous development would not have been possible in the pre-1991 political situation given the conflicts which existed between the Kurds and the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein.

addition, corruption and networks of patronage are widely documented features of the political landscape and are of a level comparable to related socio-economic and political dynamics acknowledged in the cases of other unrecognised entities. Whatever one's position on the physics of internal affairs in Kurdistan, analysis of recent political and economic successes in Kurdistan should be tempered with an appreciation of the highly ambiguous and complicated internal and geopolitical contexts which continue to dictate the parameters and level of potential for the Kurds to realise their long-held dreams of independence, self-rule and autonomy.

As Kurdish politicians adopt the role of statesmen within Iraqi politics, and exert greater influence over the trajectory of Iraqi affairs⁴, alterations in the substance and rhetoric of Kurdish nationalism have developed as a response to changes in regional politics and the input of a younger generation of Iraqi Kurds whose political viewpoints are hewn from political changes since 1991.⁵ Kurdish nationalism, although far from a singular or cohesive phenomenon, remains a very potent ideological factor in Middle East regional politics, particularly in Turkey, and increasingly in Iran and Syria. Therefore, in its discussion of statelessness, ambiguity, and illegitimacy this thesis recognises that whatever political science or international relations frameworks are applied in the case of Kurdistan, there is a powerful symbolic dimension to Kurdish self-rule, a dimension rooted in historical experience, which should no longer be ignored. Whilst this thesis focuses largely on the dynamics of *de facto* independence which sustain unrecognised entities it should be noted that statecraft in these cases can be surreptitious and within the example of Iraqi Kurdish politics some politicians have explicitly articulated their desire for an independent Kurdish state in the region.

The territorial space occupied by Iraqi Kurdistan continues to be a highly problematic influence on the transition currently occurring in northern Iraq. Geopolitically, the Kurdistan region straddles a tri-border geographical space with Syria, Turkey and Iran which places any nascent Kurdish state in an existential paradox. As a

⁴ Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and a leading Kurdish politician, was elected President of Iraq on April 6th 2005 by the Iraqi National Assembly. Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) is President of the Iraqi Kurdistan region since 2005. The PUK's Barham Salih acted as Deputy Prime Minister in the Iraqi Government and (at the time of writing) is serving Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

⁵ See Hashem Ahmadzadeh, *Nation and Novel: A Study of Persian and Kurdish Narrative Discourse* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2003), pp. 127-139.

legally approbated part of federal Iraq since constitutional negotiations in 2005⁶, the geopolitical location of Iraqi Kurdistan is extremely disadvantageous from a secessionist perspective. Yet secession (and its derivative ideologies and discourses) continues to play a symbolic role in shaping Kurdish nationalism in Iraq even if there is substantial empirical evidence to suggest that Kurdish cultural, political, and linguistic integration is extensive and far-reaching within Iraq's borders. This increased level of integration into the socio-economic fabric of post-Ba'athist Iraq confounds a great deal of literature on separatism, secession and the traditional status of nationalist exceptionalism in the realm of ethno-political analysis. In the case of contemporary Iraq, the presence of a Kurdish controlled 'state-like' entity within the Iraqi state's historical borders is also accompanied by the presence of Kurdish political elites whose current power will inevitably contribute to the transformation of symbolic order within Iraqi politics. Debates concerning self-determination and independence are an ever-present feature of society and politics in both Iraqi Kurdistan and wider Kurdish homelands in the Middle East and beyond. This thesis acknowledges the complexity of the desire for independent statehood and frames them against the obstacles and constraints of *de facto* independence encountered within the politics of unrecognised entities. The discussion which forms the backbone of this thesis is, therefore, partly a response to a lack of fluidity in academic analysis on unrecognised entities and the absence of research into the myriad ways in which the example of Iraqi Kurdistan challenges the still widely generalised and normative definitions emerging from political science analysis of unrecognised entities in the international system.

The issue of transition is relevant to the discussion that follows. The term is commonly used to denote a passage from one condition or state to another. In a political science context it has become widely used to contextualise debates over democratisation, to the extent that one will often find reference to so called *transition theory*, even if such a holistic theory of democratic transition remains context specific and problematic⁷. Within the framework of the discussion, the concept of transition is used to analyse the historic passage through unique phases of political order and socio-economic development inside Iraqi Kurdistan. It is also contended that the current shaping of

⁶ Gareth Stansfield, *Iraq* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), pp. 184-185.

⁷ A good discussion of this is found in Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

political space in northern Iraq is indicative of an unrecognised entity *in transition* – a political event which occurs infrequently and has been scarcely analysed within a political science framework in terms of its regenerative significance. The histories of politically volatile regions have been analysed in terms of democratic transition (or transition *to* democratic political systems) but the transitional pathways to democracy and nation formation found within unrecognised entities are far from understood in terms of their impact on political space and status. The thesis presented will argue that patterns of development and adjustment in Iraqi Kurdistan point to a transition from ‘statelessness’ and questionable legitimacy to a form of sovereignty and symbolic order which does not immediately necessitate an ongoing equivalence with statehood or stateness. Central to this idea is the notion that the transition (or transitions) visible in Iraqi Kurdistan suggest the regional polity is already advanced in establishing its legitimacy internationally, both within and outside of a framework provided by a contiguous Iraqi state and international norms. The processes at work behind such transitions are very much the central focus of the thesis, and it is argued that processes of function and transition are unique in each unrecognised entity. It is contended that the conceptual equivalence of these ambiguous territories and polities with paradigms of statehood has diverted the attention of scholars from a range of more problematic questions.

This thesis closely examines how the Kurdish political and economic experiment in northern Iraq is not creating a *de facto* state or a ‘quasi-state’ per se, but a far more ambiguous and less quantifiable political scenario with operational parameters which have not been theoretically examined in the context of unrecognised entities. At the formal level, the transition occurring in Iraqi Kurdistan can be articulated in terms of KRG attempts at moving the region toward the creation of a commercial *entrepôt* as part of a wider political and economic agenda; as well as being part of a highly considered ideological project by the KRG – one in which transition to statehood has not been fully ruled out. What is surprising is how this form of political and institutional development may, in the short term, allow the Kurdish administration to offset the negative effects of ambiguous status by adopting a model which, as other examples in the international system attest, provides leverage in more sophisticated economic and political terms. The success of this strategy has profound implications for the future of Iraqi politics as it has

significantly reshaped the ability of the Kurds to negotiate their political future in the Middle East. The arguments put forward in this thesis are designed to demonstrate how, theoretically, it is possible for political actors to operate within parameters of autonomy and *de facto* independence which are not only highly ambiguous, but extremely effective even though they lack *de jure* recognition in international law. The hypothesis is put forward in chapters two and four that the creation or attainment of a state (or statehood) is not always the dominant strategy of political actors who function within asymmetric constraints, even if the territory they control appears state-like in form and function.

In terms of political significance, Iraqi Kurdistan's geopolitical presence in the Middle East, and its effect on the political economy of the region, are both far from negligible. The political and ideological forces currently driving the strategies of the KRG, and how these forces are shaping the wider character of political development in Iraq, have received increasing attention from political scientists at a time when the political future of the Iraqi state remains uncertain and nebulous. In this context, the fifth chapter's discussion of the political economy of the Kurdistan autonomous region in northern Iraq highlights a theoretical gap in academic literature on the economic and political development of Iraq since the removal of the Ba'ath regime in 2003. The role of this chapter is to provide important contextual information on economic development within an unrecognised entity. In addition, the motivational role played by economics, and the impact this role has on political decision-making, represents a major lacuna in political science analysis of separatism and the formation of secessionist aspiration in the context of unrecognised entities.⁸ The economic role played by Iraqi Kurdistan within the wider political economy of the Middle East also remains largely unexamined but lies beyond the scope of this discussion. The emergence of a Kurdish commercial *entrepôt* will also be considered from a theoretical perspective in order to evaluate whether or not a political-economic precedent of suitability exists for such development strategies in the context of unrecognised entities.

Given Iraqi Kurdistan's lack of *de jure* legitimacy in international society (notwithstanding its federal status within Iraq) it is necessary to situate the region within

⁸ Due to its geopolitical significance, Iraqi Kurdistan has been referred to as '...a laboratory for theories of political science and international relations.' See Gareth Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 180.

a wider analysis and discussion of unrecognised entities in order to evaluate whether historical and political developments in northern Iraq provide a challenge to existing political science and international relations discourses on statehood, state sovereignty and ethno-politics. An analysis of Iraqi Kurdistan's transitional emergence from a zone of conflict to an unrecognised entity can be framed against existing academic enquiry into those unrecognised 'states' which emerged out of the collapse of the former Soviet Union (e.g., Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia). However, due to contextual divergence, these examples provide a limited comparative framework through which to establish the unique position of the unrecognised Kurdish entity as it experiences the challenges of an ongoing transition.⁹ There are many conclusions which can be drawn from political tensions and secessionist conflict between these separatist entities and the 'metropolitan' states from which they seek independence. So far there has been scant analysis of the economic motivations behind secessionist conflict in Eastern Europe, Eurasia, Caucasia, Central Asia and the Middle East. It is this researcher's aim to explore this gap in contemporary analysis through a study of Iraqi Kurdistan's economic predicament in both its social and political contexts. Outside of a Eurasian context, it is the Iraqi state which here provides the necessary metropolitan dynamic for this research to compare and contrast existing theories of the *de facto* state with a theoretical engagement that elucidates the position of the autonomous entity in northern Iraq.¹⁰

Literature Review

This study assesses the defining theoretical attributes of unrecognised entities and exposes theoretical problems encountered when these attributes are applied in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan. Through its analysis of the theoretical space occupied by Iraqi Kurdistan

⁹ See Scott Pegg, 'De Facto States in the International System,' Institute of International Relations – University of British Columbia, *Working Paper No. 21*, 1998; Dov Lynch, *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States* (Washington DC: United States Institute for Peace Press, 2004); Darel E. Paul, 'Sovereignty, Survival and the Westphalian blind alley in International Relations,' *Review of International Studies*, 25, 1999, pp. 217-231

¹⁰ The political processes and strategies of the KRG are not easily defined and a great deal of obscurity surrounds decision making between interest groups and actors within Kurdish politics. This thesis, therefore, acknowledges from the outset that interpretative resources may not always be ready to hand when discussing 'the political' inside Kurdistan, and there remain a great many empirical aspects to Kurdish politics which can only be hinted at but which remain firmly outside the scope of this discussion.

in political science and international relations theory, the work may be viewed as part of a specific body of literature dealing with unrecognised entities which has continued to develop since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. Despite the presence of several book-length volumes dedicated to the study of unrecognised entities, the body of literature tackling the subject remains extremely limited with the widest range of available literature taking the form of journal articles and article-length contributions in edited volumes. Few, if any, works on the subject tackle in-depth the wide array of theoretical problems which challenge and confront analysis of unrecognised entities; and it is here that this study seeks to make its most significant contribution.

This study assesses a corpus of texts which can be taken as representing principal literature on the phenomenon of unrecognised entities. These works are consulted and referenced throughout this study as they still remain the strongest influence on research into unrecognised entities across all academic disciplines. Notable titles include *International Society and the De Facto State* and *De Facto States in the International System* by Scott Pegg¹¹, Pål Kolstø's *The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States*¹², the edited volume by Tozin Bahcheli, Barry Bartmann and Henry Srebrnik entitled *De facto States: The quest for sovereignty*¹³, Charles King's *The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognised States*¹⁴, Dov Lynch's *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States*¹⁵, and Nina Caspersen's *From Kosovo to Karabakh: International Responses to De Facto States*¹⁶. All of these works provide valuable insight into the question of unrecognised entities in international law, the empirical characteristics of these post-conflict spaces, specific forms of political mobilisation associated with these entities, and a detailed coverage of relations between

¹¹ Scott Pegg, 'De Facto States in the International System'. Institute of International Relations – University of British Columbia, *Working Paper No. 21* (1998); *International Society and the De Facto State* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

¹² Pål Kolstø, 'The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States' *Journal of Peace Research*, 43:6 (2006), 723-740.

¹³ Tozin Bahcheli, Barry Bartmann and Henry Srebrnik (eds.), *De Facto States: The Quest for Sovereignty* (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁴ Charles King, 'The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognised States', *World Politics*, 53:4, (2001).

¹⁵ Dov Lynch, *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2004).

¹⁶ Nina Caspersen, 'From Kosovo to Karabakh: International Responses to De Facto States', *Südosteuropa*, 56:1, (2008).

unrecognised entities and their parent states. Pegg's works in particular provide valuable excursus on the position of unrecognised entities in international law and are frequently cited due to Pegg's early attempts to define the phenomenon of the *de facto* state and its theoretical relationship with international society. In particular, Pegg highlighted issues of enduring illegitimacy and the problems associated with remaining a non-sovereign territorial entity in the international system. However, by proposing a rigid set of material criteria which must be possessed if an entity is to be regarded as a *de facto* state, Pegg set-off a controversy which has endured to the present. A lack of agreement among scholars over how best to represent unrecognised entities as an analytical concept, and the contentious issue of which examples should and should not be included as case studies, has become a defining feature of literature and debate on this subject. This study assesses the theoretical roots of the controversies surrounding the conceptual treatment of unrecognised entities, and detailed coverage of the aforementioned literature is found throughout the following chapters of this thesis.

The amount of literature focused specifically on unrecognised entities (*de facto* states, quasi-states, semi-states, pseudo-states etc.) is remarkably scarce and there are virtually no works specifically dedicated to examining the position of Iraqi Kurdistan as an unrecognised entity. Hence theoretical analysis on the subject remains a significant lacuna within international relations, international politics, political science, area studies and security studies literature. Most existing work in this field focuses on *post facto* ethno-politics and political development from an empirical perspective. Rarely, if ever, are the analytical concepts used to define unrecognised entities subjected to in-depth scrutiny. A problem for research in this field is that the body of literature can be divided into works which focus exclusively on regional political contexts and those works which examine the phenomenon of unrecognised entities in an international perspective. Although clearly an international phenomenon, there exists a tendency for case studies drawn from Eurasia and the Caucasus to dominate coverage of unrecognised entities. The dominance of such regionally specific case material has had a profound impact on the development of theoretical literature on these entities, and a wide number of generalisations developed for post-Soviet paradigms have impacted on international contexts without due scrutiny. In keeping with the aim of this study to expand the small

body of theoretical literature on unrecognised entities in the international system, this section provides an overview of existing studies and their theoretical contribution to the field.

Literature on Unrecognised Entities

It is notable when reviewing literature on unrecognised entities that most, if not all, studies into the subject portray these phenomena as states which have not been recognised by international society and remain in an enduring predicament of illegitimacy (conferred by non-recognition). Much of the early theoretical research into the problem of unrecognised entities took the issue of non-recognition as a point of departure. Whether the study focused on international law or political development, questions of illegitimate status and non-recognition became the overarching framework for subsequent theoretical research into this area.

Published in 1998, Scott Pegg's book-length study on unrecognised states *International Society and the De Facto State* (and the shorter working paper *De Facto States in the International System*) can be recognised as one of the most influential and widely referenced works on unrecognised entities in the field. Pegg's analysis defines the phenomenon of the unrecognised state in contemporary international relations and establishes the specific usage of the term 'de facto state' through analysis of the concept of the 'Quasi-state' developed by Robert Jackson in his 1993 work *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World*¹⁷. Pegg distinguishes the *de facto* state from Jackson's quasi-state by the recognition attained by the latter and brings to our attention the existence of political communities which do not qualify as nation-states even though they are effective from a governance perspective. Through the case examples of Eritrea prior to independence from Ethiopia, the Republic of Somaliland, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) controlled area of Sri Lanka, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Pegg examines the conditions which lead to the emergence and development of *de facto* states.

¹⁷ Robert Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

By focusing on structural politics and questions of international legal convention, Pegg's analysis examines a wealth of theoretical issues concerning the effect such entities have on our understanding of state break-up and how the analytical concept of the *de facto* state impacts on multifaceted issues of secessionist politics, ethnicity, ethno-politics, identity, ideology, and history. Pegg's work left an important legacy for research into unrecognised entities as he successfully managed to define the problem and situate it within the conceptual frames of international law and politics, but in doing so, he introduced a discourse on unrecognised states which, instead of possessing theoretical flexibility, reduced the phenomenon to a set of rigid criteria which later scholarship duly had to either accommodate, expand or modify. One of the substantial gaps in Pegg's coverage is that it lacked a theoretically flexible approach to one of the central dynamics governing the emergence and formation of unrecognised entities, namely, that of secession. Although identified as secessionist entities, Pegg's analysis contained few theoretical insights into the emerging geo-politics of *de facto* independence and how the antagonisms visible between breakaway entities and their parent states could be refigured at the end of the Cold War in terms other than secession. Recognition should be given to the fact that Pegg's research was heavily influenced by international relations perspectives which viewed the state to be the principal unit of legitimacy and sovereignty in international order, and, more likely than not, it was not his intention to propose a radical theory of state break-up. However, the specific scope and utility of Pegg's theoretical approach is increasingly evident as this early state-centric approach relies too much on a binary opposition between the concepts of sovereignty and non-recognition. In Pegg's earlier representations of the international system there are very few grey areas between legitimacy, on the one hand, and illegitimacy on the other. Thus, the works struggle to engage critically with the dynamic of *de facto* independence and there is little self-reflective analysis of the state-centric discourses which underpin the assumptions, generalisations, and world view presented in coverage by Jackson and other scholars who influenced Pegg's conceptual schema.

Charles King's 2001 article *The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognised States* provides a good analytical overview of the unrecognised entities which emerged out of ethnic war in post-Soviet Eurasia. One of the key strengths of

King's work, when viewed as an expansion of the coverage provided by Pegg, resides in King's micro-level analysis of the political economic motivations underlying ethno-political conflict in unrecognised entities. King examines how war is a vital catalyst in the creation of states, and how informal networks of profit, power and authority coalesce and ossify into institutions of states. The work is well balanced in its amalgamation of empirical case insight and theoretical analysis. King's approach is critical toward the labelling of conflict as 'ethnic' or religious' instead focusing his analysis squarely on the economic incentives which sustain lucrative shadow economies across territorial entities neglected by international relations scholarship. King's work is important as it provides detailed engagement with meta-narratives of ethnic conflict which are largely absent in the works of Pegg and are infrequently replicated in subsequent works. One criticism which can be fielded at King's analysis is that he limits his study to a purely Eurasian paradigm, and after detailed analysis of Eurasian wars and the 'unrecognised states' emerging from them, we are left with a political economy which provides little coverage of *de facto* independent unrecognised entities as a broader political dynamic within the international state system.

King's article has, however, left a significant imprint on research into unrecognised entities as he rationalised the mechanisms of corruption, patronage, and illicit trade which fund *de facto* independence in these cases. This was a valuable addition to literature on unrecognised entities as up until the publication of King's article, few insights had been put forward as to why these so called 'criminalised badlands' in Eurasia and the Caucasus were able to organise state-like structures and function with such a degree of effectiveness, even if their patterns of governance violated the basic tenets of democracy and human rights. King was one of the first analysts to establish the importance of developmental problems which existed beyond formal notions of legitimacy and status in international law, hinting that in many ways such questions were of secondary importance to other internal dynamics.

The 2004 edited volume *De Facto States: The Quest for Sovereignty* by Bahcheli, Bartmann and Srebrnik (eds.) delivered a diverse range of expertise from its contributors, making this work a literary milestone in research into unrecognised entities. Consisting of a compilation of case studies covering political analysis of Eurasian *de facto* states,

Palestine, Somaliland, TRNC, and Bougainville, this work incorporates a significant focus on issues of self-determination, with most coverage focusing on adversarial ethno-political conflicts where self-determination movements clearly seek to push back the boundaries of state sovereignty. Apart from the case studies of Palestine and the TRNC, the selected examples of secessionism share a common ambition to re-establish ethnic homelands in order to return to (or create) an idealised state of nationhood which has been subsumed by the cartographic and ideological projects of sovereign states. Bahcheli's collection significantly widens the analytical concept of Pegg's *de facto* state to incorporate self-determination movements in ethno-political disputes the world over. Although a strength of the volume, this widening of the theoretical parameters of *de facto* statehood is, perhaps, one of the contribution's major drawbacks. Notwithstanding the application of the analytical concept to cases in Eurasia and the Caucasus, the volume too readily assumes that Pegg's conceptualisation of the *de facto* state can be applied indiscriminately across contexts. There is little exploration of the theoretical limitations and benefits of *de facto* independence in the international system, and the collection presupposes, in a rather pro-secessionist manner, that *de facto* statehood requires mere political coherence in a self-determination struggle by virtue of case selection. This is clearly not the case and too often the volume tends toward generalisation among highly distinct empirical cases.

Due in no small part to the diversity of its contributor's expertise, Bahcheli's collection is more rewarding as a compilation work of political analysis on self-determination and secession. The volume draws on the experience of a number of scholars to provide a collection of chapters which address a theoretical issue alongside a case study of a particular ethno-political conflict. Contributions by Bahcheli, Bartmann and Srebrnik in particular promote the view that the sovereign state is on the retreat against a rising tide of ethnic mobilisation. The works combine to provide a thinly veiled critique of modernisation which, as the editors argue, exists in a state of unstable decay. Ethnic devolution, on the other hand, is presented as an ascendant alternative or default option which provides social cohesion in territories where the state proves divisive. At times, therefore, the volume lacks balance and appears to advocate a romantic ethnocracy of the type promoted by the Unrecognised Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO),

where self-determination movements are simplistically viewed like ethnic blocks on an alternative world map, not complex processes riven with their own differences and internecine animosities. Bahcheli's work, whilst a rigorous compilation of case-specific political analysis, does not radically advance theoretical debate on the concept of unrecognised entities and is of limited utility in the context of this thesis. Following an assessment of Bahcheli's volume it was decided that the term 'unrecognised entity' would replace *de facto* state throughout this thesis to depart from constructions of the phenomenon found in earlier scholarship and to introduce terminological neutrality.

Bahcheli's volume was followed by a number of article-length contributions which, whilst continuing to examine questions concerning the status of these entities, exhibited great variation in how each addressed more fundamental theoretical issues affecting the field of study. Most notable among these articles is Pål Kolstø's 2006 article *The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States*. Superficially similar in form to contributions found in Bahcheli's edited volume, Kolstø's coverage focuses on an issue of terminological confusion and proposes that Robert Jackson's term 'quasi-state' be rehabilitated and used to define what Scott Pegg termed the *de facto* state. Instead of the term 'quasi-state' being used in the Jacksonian sense of a recognised *but* failing (or failed) state, Kolstø advocates the use of 'failed state' to denote the latter, reserving the use of 'quasi-state' for cases such as those drawn from Eurasia and the Caucasus in his analysis. Having advocated the morphological shift he sees necessary to clarify and crystallise the notion of an 'unrecognised state', Kolstø proceeds to examine the problems of 'quasi-statehood', such as reliance on external patrons, high expenditure on propaganda and military resources, and, as his argument advances, the study constructs a model of *de facto* independence based on ethnic hegemony and paternal relations with *patron* states. Kolstø focuses on the 'modal tendency' of 'quasi-states' toward weakness (in both government and military senses) but counter-balances this critique of these entities by portraying their mono-ethnic nature and 'ethnic definition' as a stable and strong foundation for future statehood, governance and nation-building.

Kolstø's cases are almost exclusively drawn from a Eurasian context and his advocacy of a new terminological understanding of the 'quasi-state' represents a significant departure from earlier theoretical inquiries into unrecognised entities which

rested on Pegg's definition of the *de facto* state. Kolstø's co-authored paper *Living with Non-recognition: State- and Nation-building in South Caucasian Quasi-states*¹⁸ builds upon his 2006 work on quasi-states and does not concern itself directly with theoretical or conceptual issues. Instead, the authors opt to focus on the capacity of three 'quasi-states' (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh) to fulfil the functions of statehood through political and administrative processes and this is achieved through the detailed examination of statistical information. Kolstø's two works, therefore, represent a significant addition to the field of research into unrecognised entities. Although these works were perhaps not intended to provoke a radical theoretical shift, they are significant in their attempts at changing central premises in order to standardise the epistemological treatment of unrecognised entities. Due to the limited number of sources available to researchers and a reliance on definitions laid down in earlier works, the field of study into unrecognised entities harbours a fragmented and divergent theoretical legacy which Kolstø seeks to highlight. There are few other contributions to the field which directly challenge accepted generalisations or attempt to transform the basic frameworks adopted by researchers. In this regard Kolstø's work is a valuable addition. However, despite Kolstø's contribution, terminological differences between works continue to propagate and are symbolic of an ongoing theoretical fragmentation within the discipline which often supplants minor analytical changes for genuine theoretical insight.

In addition to the seminal works on the subject identified above, further analysis of unrecognised entities is provided by a broad range of inter- and multidisciplinary contributions which focus on issues of sovereignty, post-Soviet politics, secession, conflict, security and issues which broadly require some analysis of the presence of unrecognised entities in the interstate system. Analysis of democratisation and questions of status are covered in Nina Caspersen's works *From Kosovo to Karabakh: International Responses to De Facto States* and the unpublished '*Standards before status*' in the *Caucasus: State-building and democratisation in Nagorno Karabakh and*

¹⁸ Pål Kolstø & Helge Blakkisrud, 'Living with Non-recognition: State- and Nation-building in South Caucasian Quasi-states', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60:3, May 2008, pp. 483-509.

*Abkhazia*¹⁹. Often focusing on specific regional cases, issues of security and conflict resolution concerning unrecognised entities are tackled in works like *A Human Security Perspective on Transnistria: Reassessing the situation within the “Black Hole of Europe”* by Félix Buttin²⁰, *Autonomy and Conflict: Ethnoterritoriality and Separatism in the South Caucasus – Cases in Georgia* by Svante E. Cornell²¹, *Peace strategies in “frozen” ethno-territorial conflicts: integrating reconciliation into conflict management – The case of Nagorno Karabakh* by Aytan Gahramanova²², *‘Outsourcing’ de facto Statehood: Russia and the Secessionist Entities in Georgia and Moldova* by Nicu Popescu²³, *Separatist States and post-Soviet Conflicts* by Dov Lynch²⁴, Edward Walker’s *No Peace, No War in the Caucasus: Secessionist Conflicts in Chechnya, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh*²⁵, and Scott Pegg’s later work *The ‘Taiwan of the Balkans’? The De Facto State Option for Kosova*²⁶.

Among the works listed above there is a high degree of variation between the assumptions and generalisations used as theoretical frameworks for subsequent empirical analysis and the testing of hypotheses. At the time of writing there are no broader analytical works covering the study of unrecognised entities in international theory, and the field’s dominant focus on regional content still leads to great emphasis being placed on regional examples from Eurasia and the Caucasus. The unrecognised entity, as a theoretically ‘state-like’ object, has been incorporated into mainstream political science and international relations literature through the use of Pegg’s analytical concept of the *de facto* state and subsequent reconfigurations by Kolstø and other researchers.

¹⁹ Nina Caspersen, ‘From Kosovo to Karabakh: International Responses to De Facto States’, *Südosteuropa*, 56:1, 2008; ‘Standards before status in the Caucasus: State-building and democratization in Nagorno Karabakh and Abkhazia’, 2007, (Unpublished).

²⁰ Félix Buttin, ‘A Human Security Perspective on Transnistria: Reassessing the situation within the “Black Hole of Europe”’, *Human Security Journal*, 3, 2007.

²¹ Svante E. Cornell, ‘Autonomy and Conflict: Ethnoterritoriality and Separatism in the South Caucasus – Cases in Georgia’, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Report No. 61, Uppsala, 2002.

²² Aytan Gahramanova, ‘Peace strategies in “frozen” ethno-territorial conflicts: integrating reconciliation into conflict management – The case of Nagorno Karabakh’, Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung, Working Paper No. 103, 2007.

²³ Nicu Popescu, ‘“Outsourcing” de facto Statehood: Russia and the Secessionist Entities in Georgia and Moldova’, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), *Policy Brief*, No. 109, July 2006.

²⁴ Dov Lynch, ‘Separatist States and post-Soviet Conflicts’, *International Affairs*, 78:4, 2002, pp. 831-848.

²⁵ Edward Walker, ‘No Peace, No War in the Caucasus: Secessionist Conflicts in Chechnya, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh’, Centre for Science and International Affairs, *Occasional Paper*, February 1998.

²⁶ Scott Pegg, ‘The ‘Taiwan of the Balkans’? The De Facto State Option for Kosova’, *Southeast European Politics*, 1:2, December 2000, pp. 90-100.

However, dedicated research into the theoretical questions posed by these entities has waned considerably in recent years with new analytical contributions to the field becoming increasingly scarce. The lack of theoretical tools available to researchers is evident as relatively few recent works in the field have departed from the construct of the *de facto* state advanced by Pegg and uptake of Kolstø's quasi-state designation remains slight.

Literature on Iraqi Kurdistan as an Unrecognised Entity

A distinct lack of attention has been given to the examination of Iraqi Kurdistan's presence in the Middle East from the perspective of existing debates surrounding unrecognised entities. There are no volumes specifically dedicated to illuminating the many theoretical questions posed by the emergence of an autonomous Kurdish enclave within the sovereign body of Iraq with reference to research conducted into unrecognised entities. Eminent political and historical volumes on Iraq rarely, if ever, marry the subject of an autonomous Kurdistan with an appreciation of the work conducted by international relations scholars into unrecognised entities. The problematic term '*de facto* state' – problematic due to its specific definition and case-led meaning which some would argue excludes Iraqi Kurdistan - has, over the past decade, appeared in works on Iraqi Kurdistan to describe the emergence of political autonomy and *de facto* independence in northern Iraq. However, the term is often directly borrowed without substantial analysis of the debates and controversies surrounding the term itself or whether Pegg himself ever intended the term to cover the case in question. Comprehensive academic analysis of Iraqi Kurdistan's position as an unrecognised entity, therefore, remains virtually absent and the region is often only mentioned in speculative lists of other unrecognised entities, or its example is included to give context to comparative political science or international relations analysis of notionally similar regional paradigms²⁷.

²⁷ An example is Iraqi Kurdistan's conceptualisation as a "pseudo-state" in Kladimir Kolossov and John O'Loughlin 'Pseudo-States as Harbingers of a New Geopolitics: The Example of the Trans-Dniester Moldovan Republic (TMR)', in D. Newman, ed., *Boundaries, Territory, and Postmodernity* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 151-176.

Variations in the treatment of Iraqi Kurdistan as an unrecognised entity have started to emerge in recent area studies scholarship. Two notable examples are Matan Chorev's article *Iraqi Kurdistan: The Internal Dynamics and Statecraft of a Semistate*²⁸ and analysis of Iraqi Kurdistan in Carl Dahlman's *The Political Geography of Kurdistan*²⁹. Chorev's paper length study is unique in its attempt to situate and elucidate the position of Iraqi Kurdistan within earlier discussions surrounding unrecognised entities. Like most other works on unrecognised entities, Chorev's analysis considers these political entities as one of the 'innumerable' forms of the modern nation state. By doing so this contribution to the body of literature on unrecognised entities adopts an already standardised discourse on the subject which places state aspiration (or the ambition to become a legitimate sovereign state) at the centre of its theoretical framework. In this regard, Chorev's theoretical framework is a smooth amalgamation of earlier concepts developed by Scott Pegg and Pål Kolstø. Furthering the academic tradition of terminological entrepreneurship in analysis on unrecognised entities, Chorev defines the object of study as the 'Semistate' – a term so far confined to Chorev's analysis which has not entered common academic usage. Chorev's use of the term semistate is problematic and remains undefined within his paper although equivalence with Kolstø's "quasi-state" is apparent. One of the major shortcomings of Chorev's work is that he never explains the empirical and theoretical distinctions between his analytical concept of the semistate and those proposed by Pegg and Kolstø. The greatest part of Chorev's coverage is dedicated to summary overview of political and economic issues within the Kurdistan region, with theoretical examination of the region's position as an unrecognised entity supporting his contentions on the political development and future of the region. The work is of particular note for the array of academic sources used to situate Iraqi Kurdistan within academic analysis of unrecognised states. The bibliography will, therefore, be of value to those researching issues surrounding Iraqi Kurdistan's status and political development.

²⁸ Matan Chorev, 'Iraqi Kurdistan: The Internal Dynamics and Statecraft of a Semistate', *Al Nakhlah Online Journal*, The Fletcher School \ Tufts University, Fall 2007.

²⁹ Carl Dahlman, 'The Political Geography of Kurdistan', *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 43:4, 2002, pp. 271-299.

Carl Dahlman's *The Political Geography of Kurdistan* is an excellent resource due to its survey of the complex historical, ethno-political and cultural dynamics within the stateless region of Kurdistan as a homeland residing within Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Dahlman's analysis of Iraqi Kurdistan is unique in that the author explicitly and unapologetically uses Kolossov and O'Loughlin's term "pseudo-state"³⁰ to describe Iraqi Kurdistan under the KRG. Dahlman's work was, in many ways, ahead of its time in recognising early on the probability that Iraqi Kurdistan would not emerge as a sovereign state due to its unsettled political situation. Dahlman's work is a valuable contribution to literature on Kurdistan both as a detailed survey of the troubled politics of the Kurdish homelands and as a bibliographic resource.

In conclusion, whilst there are several book-length studies and a body of articles dedicated to the research of unrecognised entities in the international system, these have some clear limitations in a Middle East context. There is no direct study of the relationship between Iraqi Kurdistan, as an autonomous political enclave, and the sovereign bodies which surround it which takes into account the theoretical debates developed in international relations and political science analysis of unrecognised entities in other regions. Moreover, theoretical works on the subject of unrecognised entities are increasingly showing their age and the most recent have tended to narrow in empirical focus rather than examine theoretical questions on sovereignty, legitimacy and autonomy which challenge earlier scholarship in the field. Some literary resources on unrecognised entities have not been included in this review as they represent polemics by journalists and activists rather than providing a more comprehensive academic treatment. In summary, this thesis forges new ground by examining theoretical issues relevant to both the study of unrecognised entities and academic approaches to regions such as Iraqi Kurdistan which have hardly been covered by existing literature.

Theoretical Framework

This thesis analyses the analytical concept of the 'unrecognised state' which exists within the fields of area studies, political science and international relations. By definition, it is

³⁰ See Kolossov, K. and O'Loughlin, J., Op. Cit.

a study of conceptual variation in an interdisciplinary environment, variation which this study suggests has led to significant theoretical problems for researchers at a time when unrecognised autonomous and *de facto* independent enclaves remain a prominent subject in international politics. Consequently, this thesis is a textual analysis which, although dealing with a wide range of international relations and political science theory, can be firmly situated within debates concerning territory, sovereignty, and the role of the state in international politics. Due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the analysis, this thesis can be seen as a work of critical geopolitics incorporating both political science and international relations theory in order to examine dynamics and processes which occur beyond the spatial levels of political organisation in international society. Yet it is also a textual study of discourse within academic approaches toward unrecognised entities and how these discourses have been influenced and shaped by debates on globalisation, the de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation of the state, international political economy, and the geopolitical imagination of autonomy movements themselves.

There are as yet no prominent theoretical approaches or frameworks developed specifically for research into unrecognised entities. Within the disciplines of political science and international relations, scholars have adapted and extracted from existing theoretical approaches and frameworks in order to arrive at research models useful for the study of unrecognised entities. Due to a lack of terminological and taxonomic consensus within the field of research into unrecognised entities, no overarching theory exists to be tested against the empirically measurable processes and dynamics encountered in *de facto* independent enclaves. The field of study is, therefore, highly fragmented in terms of theoretical enquiry and empirical focus; the latter being restricted to the preferences and research interests of the scholars themselves. Thus, this thesis may also be considered a critical excursus on the *state of the art* within political science and international politics related fields which have struggled to define a unique form of political mobilisation, the *de facto* independent unrecognised entity, within contemporary theoretical schema.

This section conceptualises the theoretical definitions used throughout this thesis. Particular focus is given to the three core concepts of sovereignty, the state, and secession by drawing on theoretical analysis within international relations and political science. By engaging with and developing a theoretical understanding of these analytical concepts,

this section seeks to arrive at working definitions which will serve as a framework for later analysis of the regional example of Iraqi Kurdistan as an unrecognised autonomous entity in the international system.

Theorising Sovereignty

The concept of sovereignty is of particular theoretical importance within this study. This section explores various theoretical approaches to sovereignty within international relations literature. Unrecognised autonomous entities are defined by an absence of legal (*de jure*) sovereignty which places them outside the same conceptual space occupied by the legitimate sovereign states which surround them, or of which they form a part. The classical definition of sovereignty – ‘a political entity’s externally recognized right to exercise final authority over its own affairs’³¹ – has traditionally been assumed to be a privilege denied to unrecognised entities. Literature on the subject has defined the unrecognised entity purely in terms of a lack of external recognition regardless of evidence which suggests this recognition is not vital to the maintenance of political community in such cases. One of the problems associated with promoting a physical or theoretical distinction between unrecognised autonomies and sovereign actors is the issue that both possess *de facto* autonomy. It is the possession of *de facto* autonomy which enables the maintenance of political community and security in a state of equilibrium despite a lack of external recognition. This implies that whilst unrecognised entities are excluded from the dialogue of non-intervention attributed to sovereignty, their presence within the spheres of influence created by dialogue and interaction between sovereign actors affords them a great deal of protection from the use of force. The implication here is that there is a stark difference between *de jure* sovereignty and *de facto* autonomy – the sovereign state possesses both (in times of peace) whereas the unrecognised autonomous entity subsists quite effectively on the maintenance of *de facto* autonomy by any means.

As explained by Stephen D. Krasner, there is a further complication to the issue of *de facto* autonomy as the requirement of states to ‘not intervene in each other’s internal

³¹ Although in widespread usage, this cited definition of sovereignty is taken from Naeem Inayatullah’s ‘Beyond the sovereignty dilemma: quasi-states as a social construct’, in Biersteker & Weber (eds.) *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 51.

affairs'³², a common value attributed to the existence of an international “society” of states, is not, by definition, incumbent upon or extended to unrecognised autonomous entities and other ‘actors [...] who have no inherent *right to exist*’³³. Because of the apparent devaluation of *de facto* autonomy in the case of unrecognised entities, the ability of a proximate regional sovereign to interfere in the internal affairs of the metropolitan state in which the unrecognised entity is situated is greatly enfranchised. This study argues that an important facilitator of autonomy in the case of unrecognised entities is their enhanced ability to subvert the rubric of statecraft in international society, a strategy often involving the support of a proximate ethno-political or geo-political guarantor, claims of remedial ethno-political rights to secession, and the *post-facto* development of parallel institutional systems which accommodate a range of interest groups and actors emerging out of the post-conflict division of power within these political enclaves.

In theorising sovereignty, this study does not attempt to situate unrecognised entities within rationalist, realist, or liberal institutionalist theories of international relations scholarship. These approaches, according to Krasner, ‘simply assume that sovereign states (unitary, rational, autonomous) are the ontological building blocks of the international system.’³⁴ This thesis identifies the limitations of rationalist and realist approaches when dealing with questions surrounding unrecognised entities, and identifies theoretical problems in earlier scholarship which attempted to define and situate unrecognised entities within those long established frameworks. Whilst appreciating the usefulness of international relations theory, this study is primarily aimed at examining the analytical concepts developed by scholars dealing with the threefold interaction between sovereignty, the state, and secessionist movements. Different schools of thought concerned with the nature of the international system and its constituent components are examined to shed light on the theoretical encoding of unrecognised entities within these political science and international relations discourses.

Although early works on unrecognised entities by Scott Pegg, Charles King, Dov Lynch, and other interdisciplinary analysts attempted to situate the phenomenon of the unrecognised *de facto* state within a status-centric conceptual schema (i.e., one concerned

³² Stephen D. Krasner, ‘Abiding Sovereignty’, *International Political Science Review*, 22:3, (2001), p. 230.

³³ *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

with questions of external legitimacy), defining unrecognised entities as fully-formed states lacking a fundamental legitimising qualification possessed by other sovereign bodies, was found to be a far from persuasive argument in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan. Despite the existence of a generalised list of unrecognised entities, a list which incorporates Iraqi Kurdistan, there exist noteworthy political differences between cases *vis-à-vis* the processes which led to their establishment and the maintenance of *de facto* autonomy over the long-term. Therefore the critique potential of the unrecognised entity as an analytical concept remains unexamined in terms of how rationalist international relations theoretical frameworks apply commonality and conceptual fixity to a phenomenon where empirically such commonality between cases is highly elusive.

In its analysis of sovereignty and the issue of secession, this thesis challenges the *Gestalt*³⁵ understanding of unrecognised entities which has its foundations in early international relations and security studies excursus on the status of unrecognised entities in international law.³⁶ Firstly, this thesis adopts a theoretical and analytical approach in which equivalence with the sovereign nation-state is abandoned from the outset. This critical theoretical position is adopted in order to make a clear distinction between this study and extant objectified analysis of these entities as states ‘in waiting’ or states ‘in all but name’; adopting instead the perspective that if these units of political mobilisation do not possess *de jure* recognition as autonomous sovereign bodies, they are *not* states and the term “state” should not be used to define the phenomenon in question. By branding unrecognised entities as ‘*de facto* states’ significant material and theoretical burdens are placed upon the analytical concept – a burden which demands, on the one hand, that these entities be quantified within the perceived hierarchical structures of the international state system yet, on the other hand, simultaneously demands their exclusion through modal designations of illegitimacy. This theoretical placement of the unrecognised entity as a subaltern state, an insurgent state, or an aberration in the logic and systems of international law, fails to engage with the complex processes and dynamics of secession

³⁵ The term *Gestalt* is taken from the German *Die Gestalt* which is a term used to denote a ‘wholeness’ in form and shape. The use of the term in this thesis implies no direct association with *Gestalt psychology*. The term is here used in its critical sense to imply that within international relations and political science discourses the analytical concept of the unrecognised or *de facto* state has been defined in terms which imbue the concept with concreteness and a set of innate tendencies.

³⁶ See Scott Pegg, ‘De Facto States in the International System,’ Institute of International Relations – University of British Columbia, *Working Paper No. 21*, 1998.

and ethno-political mobilisation which situate these entities as arguably distinct (in form and function) from the equivalent developmental trends experienced and fine-tuned by sovereign states over considerably longer periods. Unrecognised entities may be nascent or emergent ethno-political autonomies which resemble, in a generalised sense, the pre-sovereign genesis of states, but to assume they function as states ‘in all but name’ is no longer a reliable or persuasive argument given the variables and enduring impairments which contra-indicate accession to the club of sovereign states in the majority of these cases.

Importantly, this work engages with significant gaps in contemporary research on sovereignty and the formation of autonomous political communities. In particular, the study addresses an absence of theoretical engagement with dynamics of illegitimate *de facto* sovereignty and independence in unrecognised entities, and how autonomy movements and regimes (secessionist or otherwise) operate in an environment where the aegis of the state persists as a significant limiting factor despite the increasing relevance of non-state or sub-national capacity and capability in a globalised world. Whereas earlier discussions concerning the status of unrecognised entities have been uncritical of notions of an international sovereign society and the symbolic existence of an international ‘club’ of states, this thesis identifies how sovereignty has been commodified in both international relations and political science discourses on unrecognised entities. This commodification, it is argued, has led to sovereignty’s problematic theoretical construction along lines of attainment, award, and achievement as if it were a prize, object, or political milestone marking transition from illegitimacy to legitimacy.

In response, this thesis moves away from the commodification of sovereignty as an object traded across the international system and instead returns to earlier notions of sovereignty as an irreducible and ongoing process of dialogue signified by principles of ideology as well as the symbolic virtues and traditional context of non-intervention in the affairs of other states through the means of absolute force. Joseph A. Camilleri reminds us that the ‘theory of state sovereignty parallels the evolution of the modern state’³⁷ but in recognising this relationship – a relationship often presented as a kind of synthesis of the

³⁷ Joseph A. Camilleri, ‘Rethinking Sovereignty in a Shrinking, Fragmented World,’ in Walker & Mendlovitz (eds.) *Contending Sovereignties: Rethinking Political Community* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990), p. 13

insights contained in both realist and rationalist international relations theories – Camilleri suggests that sovereignty ‘formalises the evolving relationship between state and civil society, between political authority and political community’³⁸. This thesis contends that sovereignty is no less of a process, or evolving relationship, in the case of unrecognised entities which lack *de jure* recognition of their autonomy and independence in international law. The argument is made more sophisticated not just by recognising the contentions of scholars like Camilleri and F. H. Hinsley, who both remind us that sovereignty ‘is not a fact’³⁹, but through utilising the epistemological variations encountered across international relations, political science theory and critical geopolitics to identify possible theoretical shortcomings in academic approaches toward sovereignty and the question of unrecognised entities. By adopting an approach to the question of sovereignty which recognises similarities in relationships between political authority and political community in both recognised and unrecognised systems, this work proposes a relational structure which challenges the structural realist view of an international system consisting of sets of entities with intrinsic natures, qualities, and hierarchical status – a view which has to date served as a theoretical point of departure for an entire canon of literature on unrecognised entities.

Likewise, literature on unrecognised entities is marked by a continuity of state-centric approaches to sovereignty. The state is, more of than not, presented as the embodiment of constitutive politics in political theory and the aspirational ideal of secession movements. This discourse of state-centrism is highly problematic in the context of unrecognised entities. Firstly, unrecognised entities often emerge following ethnic, religious, or ideological intrastate conflict, ushering forth processes of separation or secession, despite which most secessionist or separatist actors are fated to remain a constituent component of an existing sovereign body, albeit a territorially revised one (usually defined as the *parent* or *metropolitan* state in the literature). This makes state-centric approaches to both sovereignty and secessionist entities ill-fitting from a theoretical standpoint because, at the discursive level, the manifest image of the modern nation state is always superimposed over political scenarios in which popular politics is

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

chequered with unresolved conflicts and far higher levels of intrastate instability and territorial revision than have been experienced by most modern states in recent history. Warren Magnusson argues that popular politics ‘occurs at the juncture of localities and movements, and that state-centric theories conceal the character of politics by reifying localities and movements as dimensions of the state or of prepolitical civil society’⁴⁰. Magnusson’s alternative conceptual framework for the analysis of political community – a framework focused on *locality* and socio-political *movement* – provides a highly useful model for the textual analysis of political theories deployed in studies on unrecognised entities. Magnusson’s model switches the focus toward social action and post-conflict political entrepreneurship among localised socio-political movements, rather than placing too great an emphasis on constructing the unrecognised entity as a *gestalt* object – as has so often been the case in international relations and international politics analytical discourses. Likewise, sovereignty represents an *ideal type* within the political imagination which is equally symbolic, in terms of its ideological significance, to both autonomy movements and the nation state alike. As part of its theoretical framework this thesis separates the relationship between political mobilisation and political community (observable at the local and socio-political levels), from the symbolic and objectified concepts of sovereignty and the state in academic discourse which, it is argued, have far less purchase upon, and primacy within, achieved reality in these entities than academics have so far assumed to be the case. Unrecognised entities continue to thrive in the international system without the *de jure* sovereignty and statehood reified by analysts covering the subject since the early 1990s. Rethinking the conceptual parameters of this paradoxical relationship - the relationship between these entities and international society - is the principal aim of this study.

This thesis understands sovereignty to be a process of evolved dialogue between actors which is continually negotiated and re-negotiated, rather than a commodity which can be certificated or artificially deployed in an adverse political climate as if it were a product from the showroom floor. It also recognises that within literature on unrecognised entities the analytical concept of sovereignty has been used in such a way

⁴⁰ Warren Magnusson, ‘The Reification of Political Community’, in Walker & Mendlovitz (eds.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 45.

as to create illusory distinctions between forms of political mobilisation in the ecology of the global political system. The role of sovereignty as a tableau representing symbolic order in the political imagination of secessionist and ethno-nationalist movements is also acknowledged within this thesis. Consequently, the framework adopted takes a critical approach to sovereignty which reverses the traditional dialectical relationship between political theory and *ad hoc* arrangements like unrecognised entities, to one which places sovereignty and the state in conceptual context as articulations of symbolic order rather than political processes *per se*. The following section explores various theoretical approaches to the state as a contested concept, but also a site of contestation for unrecognised entities and autonomy movements.

Theorising the State

Throughout literature on unrecognised entities, the sovereign territorial state is posited as an ideal type which is looked upon as the motivational inspiration behind secession and ethno-political mobilisations seeking autonomy and independence as a pay-off. The desire for statehood has been theorised as the driving force behind secession and separatism in virtually all cases, especially in analysis of the unrecognised entities found in Eurasia and the Caucasus. Stock literature on *de facto* states defines the predicament of the unrecognised entity within a bipolar discourse of *similarity* and *difference*, resulting in a unique representation of the phenomenon which is entirely state-centric in outlook. The unrecognised state is defined as similar in physical form to the sovereign state, in terms of defined populace, territory, government and civil society⁴¹, but remains excluded from the club of international states (or international ‘personalities’ as they are sometimes referred to) due to the absence of external recognition of their sovereignty *vis-à-vis* the ideological dialogue of non-intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states adhered to by *de jure* states.

Unrecognised entities, therefore, occupy a space which is simultaneously part of the fabric of international statecraft – they reside within and among sovereign states – yet they are excluded from the meta-narratives of *de jure* legitimacy. This final realisation is one which has not been adequately addressed by academics. Instead, a discourse has

⁴¹ See Pegg, Op. Cit.

emerged within international relations and political science theory which promotes the contention that these entities are states ‘in all but name’ which function as well as, if not better than, the metropolitan parent states from which they seek secession⁴². This work contends that such narratives are illusory and obscure fundamental processes which distinguish unrecognised entities from sovereign nation states. Of particular concern are narrative definitions surrounding the *de facto* state which imply that states are easily created through mechanisms of ethnic conflict, secession, and remedial dissolution via simple processes of political separation akin to the biological concepts of cell division or binary fission – that all which is required for the creation of a pre-sovereign state is the ethnocratic detachment from a parent state, and the consolidation of political and territorial separatism following ethnic or intrastate conflict. Such a view, it can be argued, is essentialised and simplistic, unintentionally reinforcing doctrines of state-centrism at the same time as giving the freest possible lease to the consolidation of political gains following conflicts in which the pursuit of ethnic cleansing is rarely far from view.

This study understands the state to be a contested and multifaceted concept which lacks the unitary qualities so often attributed to it in literature on unrecognised entities. In an interdisciplinary setting there are few universally accepted definitions of the state as an analytical concept given the fact that the term is used to describe federated entities, polities, nation states, the sovereign state in international law, the legal state and the jurisdiction of its legislature, and myriad combinations of the above. Nevertheless, whilst open to contention, the term has an established meaning within literature on unrecognised entities which allows a level of commonality between texts in the field. Works by Robert Jackson, Scott Pegg and Pål Kolstø can all be said to approach the subject of the state from a sovereignty based perspective in which sovereignty, once attained, is viewed as extremely difficult to lose, even when the state is said to have ‘failed’⁴³. Unrecognised entities, on the other hand, are envisaged as striving awkwardly toward parity with legitimate, recognised, sovereign states but fail due to a ‘freezing’ of the political map during Cold War decolonisation processes and a reluctance by international society to

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ See Jackson, 1993; Pegg, 1998; Kolstø, 2006.

recognise the autonomy and effective governance displayed by some unrecognised entities⁴⁴. The unrecognised entity is, therefore, situated inside existing literature on a continuum which places it in a theoretical position of pre-sovereignty, with accession to statehood being the next stage in the material evolution of a territorially autonomous political movement as it progresses toward gaining a seat at the table of sovereign states. Of course, we do not have to interpret the work of these scholars as they do, but their normative encodings imply a judgement, and perhaps a prejudice, about the distance which exists between political movements calling for autonomy and the secessionist context through which their claims may be voiced.

Within the lean literary output on unrecognised entities a subtext of advocating a right of recognition is very often discernable. This argument takes a number of forms. Within Pegg's works the *de facto* state is cast as capable but stymied by international law, the victim of an institutional bias against secession⁴⁵ in international society. Kolstø argues that although their 'modal tendency is weak economy and weak state structures'⁴⁶ unrecognised entities often possess an internal strength which, combined with 'propaganda and identity building' as well as being able to 'channel a disproportionately large part of their meagre resources into military defense [...] and enjoy the support of a strong patron' explains why these entities have not collapsed⁴⁷. These discursive positions are based on long-standing generalisations concerning the relationship between unrecognised entities and the sovereign state. This study urges the proliferation of different interpretations of the mechanisms which sustain unrecognised entities in order to break with state-centric approaches hewn from security studies and international relations scholarship. An important question is how we position the political payoffs which arise from intrastate war and secession in relation to the pre-war status quo. Do we approach the unrecognised entity from a *post facto* discursive position which views them as pre-sovereign states, or do researchers approach the subject from a position which questions the emergence of unrecognised entities from an already sovereign body; and the effect of such a political genesis on their subsequent development given the

⁴⁴ See Pegg, Op. Cit.

⁴⁵ Pegg, 1998, p. 16.

⁴⁶ Pål Kolstø, 'The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States' *Journal of Peace Research*, 43:6 (2006), 723-740.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 723.

reluctance of international society to accommodate secession. In this context and as part of its theoretical definition of the state, this thesis recognises a duality in the relationship between the state and the unrecognised entity which places sovereign states firmly at both the centre of the evolution of unrecognised entities and as key brokers in deciding their fate.

Iraqi Kurdistan has been selected as a central case study for this thesis as the political evolution of a Kurdish autonomous enclave in the north of Iraq presents a unique set of challenges to the assumptions and generalisations concerning statehood and the pre-sovereign predicament developed within literature on unrecognised entities. In the case of Iraq, the relationship between the state and the autonomous entity is one where neither is able to place significant political demands upon the other. This has led to a post-2003 landscape of mutual weakness within Iraqi politics which forces us to re-evaluate the relationship between the state and autonomous entities within their *de jure* boundaries and reflect on how, as researchers, we treat these inter-relationships theoretically. The example of Iraq highlights many of the ambiguities surrounding the conceptualisation of the state in modern political discourse. As suggested by Jens Bartelson, ambiguities surrounding the state in modern political discourse ‘may possess a certain rationality of [their] own that could provide clues to how a given concept has become ambiguous and why it has stayed ambiguous despite numerous efforts to clarify it’⁴⁸. As a case study, Iraq’s political development and long history of ethno-political conflict enables this study to develop hypotheses concerning how the role of the state has been conceptualised in literature on unrecognised entities. This thesis is not concerned with ridding the concept of the state of those ambiguities which Bartelson describes as an ‘avatar of unreason’ to political scientists.⁴⁹ Rather, this thesis examines how political science and international relations discourses on ‘unrecognised states’ and *de facto* ‘states’ presuppose the presence of ‘stateness’ in both sovereign and pre-sovereign entities regardless of other contexts. Therefore, in order to specify the concept and distance this study’s analytical approach from earlier works, the term *unrecognised entity*

⁴⁸ Jens Bartelson, *The Critique of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 11.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

is used throughout to operationalise the ambiguity which is a defining attribute of these autonomous enclaves.

This study does not assume that unrecognised entities represent a *unit* or *object* of the international system in the same respect given to fully sovereign states (regardless of size or power). As is discussed in the chapters which follow, many unrecognised states inhabit an existential paradox in which the maintenance of autonomy over the long term necessitates the continual negotiation and renegotiation of political parameters both inside the autonomous enclave and its borderlands, as well as between the spheres of sovereign influence which surround it. Many of the parameters which enable an unrecognised entity to survive are unrelated to issues of *de jure* statehood. Therefore this thesis does not impose a state-centric conception of ethno-politics upon the phenomenon in question. Instead it seeks to define those political forms and processes which occur outside the conventional realm of politics and highlight the existence of a different theoretical domain for research into unrecognised entities. It is argued that the taxonomic confusion within literature on unrecognised entities represents, as Magnusson contends, ‘a distortion of political reality’ within the discipline which takes as its point of departure the reification of political form and ‘enclosure’ rather than the popular political activity itself.⁵⁰ Magnusson in particular highlights the state-centrism of existing frameworks, arguing that ‘[the] fact that movements can and do burst the enclosures of the state is evidence not of their pre-political but of their political character: their capacity to “found” or create new forms of political community, political identity, and political action.’⁵¹

Theorising Secession

Unrecognised entities have long been defined as ‘secessionist’ entities in works by Pegg and other scholars. Secession is the most substantial and overarching dynamic used to define the phenomenon in international and political theory. The fact remains, however, that in the decades after scholars first defined these entities in secessionist terms, many of them have not seceded from or have failed to separate in any concrete sense from the metropolitan state of which they form a part. From the perspective of this study, this

⁵⁰ Magnusson, Op. Cit., p. 52.

⁵¹ Ibid.

indicates the presence other factors and dynamics at play which have not been incorporated into the theoretical schema used to define these entities in international relations, security studies, and political science contexts.

This thesis adopts a process-based approach to the issue of secession which situates it within a range of strategies available to unrecognised entities which may or may not be chosen and implemented. It is argued here that a primary concern of political movements in unrecognised entities is the maintenance of autonomy over the long-term under adverse political, geopolitical and intrastate circumstances. This may involve a subversion of the rubric of statecraft and international law to obstruct the use of force by sovereign actors against the unrecognised entity in question. This thesis examines how a state of perpetual secession can be maintained over the long-term without the actual breaking-away from a metropolitan sovereignty. It also examines how this ossification of quasi-independence introduces subtle changes and tensions into the symbolic order of domestic and regional politics where unrecognised entities are situated. The relationship between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Government of Iraq is examined to shed light on the role played by Kurdish discourses of separatism and independence in Iraqi politics despite the formal disavowal of a secessionist agenda by Kurdish statesmen.

As a study in ethno-politics, this thesis acknowledges how the concept of secession has changed during the Twentieth Century from an earlier meaning which, as Hudson Meadwell argues, encompassed calls for state rights in a union or compact to one which is now more commonly deployed as a concept to define calls for self-determination within narrower ethno-political, regional and historical contexts⁵². The study also recognises the symbolic meaning and effect of secessionist mobilisations and discourses within ethno-politics and secession's presentation of a political challenge to territorial integrity formalised in international law. It is often suggested that the state is a source of political order, but frequently examples arise where such order is achieved at the expense of ethno-political rights, particularly in the case of states whose territorial and cartographic presence is seen to violate ethnic homelands which are perceived as an authentic representation of political community; a community which often constructs

⁵² Hudson Meadwell, 'Secession, States and International Society,' *Review of International Studies*, 25, (1999), pp. 386-7.

remedial rights to secede around the experience of suppression from the artificial order of centralised authority. The history of Kurdish politics within Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria is highly evocative of ideological conflict between the ethno-political aspiration to create an independent homeland and the desire of the territorial state to preserve its integrity – an integrity reified in international law and supported by distaste for secession across international society.

Whilst ethno-political conflict is recognised as a catalyst for the development of secessionist ambition, political mobilisation around rights-based agendas seeking self-determination can emerge under conditions of peace. It is argued that there exist a wide range of conditions under which unrecognised entities may be formed and (as a departure from the conceptual strictures of earlier scholarship) this thesis proposes alternatives to the secessionist model proposed in existing literature. As part of its theoretical framework, this study examines approaches toward the recognition of unrecognised entities and proposes a model which does not require that these entities be recognised as *de jure* sovereignties for us to make sense of their place in the international system. It is argued that the causal force behind political mobilisation and autonomous governance in these entities confers no obligation for recognition in international law. Autonomy and self-determination can be accommodated and limited, as in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, without ushering-in state break-up or reducing the territorial integrity of the parent state. This is a dimension of unrecognised entities which has received no theoretical analysis in existing scholarship. Evidently there is some deficiency in the use secession as an analytical concept in existing literature on unrecognised entities, and this study develops a model of secession as a process in which the act of separation is but one part of a much more complicated dialogue between non-sovereign actors, the authority of the centralised state, and international legal convention.

As part of its theoretical re-definition of secession, this study looks at how secession and partition are distinguished and how the concept of partition is notable by its absence from international relations and political science analysis of unrecognised entities. The study draws on Brendan O’Leary’s *Analyzing Partition: Definition, Classification and Explanation* (2006) in which he argues that secession and partition are conceptually and theoretically distinct processes which should not be conflated by

scholars⁵³. As existing literature on unrecognised entities has assumed all *de facto* states to be secessionist, a quality built into the very definition of the phenomenon by Scott Pegg, this thesis argues that processes other than secession may be incorporated into our understanding of these entities, processes such as partition which widen and enhance our understanding of, on the one hand, political mobilisation and the development of ethno-political autonomy, and on the other hand, our understanding of how such mobilisations are accommodated and tolerated within the international system's existing frameworks and processes.

Secession, like sovereignty, in the case of unrecognised entities remains entirely context dependent and case specific. Early literature on unrecognised entities which attempted to implement a normative encoding of the form and structural dimensions of this ambiguous type of political 'enclosure' did not explicitly identify the problem that no two cases were ever identical. Subsequent analysis did not reject this normative encoding of unrecognised entities as 'secessionist entities' and '*de facto* states' opting for an uncritical approach to both the objectified political categorisation of these entities and a one-dimensional approach toward the issue of secession. Such a position completely disregards the diversity among the objectives and reasoning of political movements seeking autonomy. Tellingly, literature on unrecognised entities has often translated the 'just cause' approach to secession in terms of political structure and function, in particular the measurement of how state-like it has become and whether it is achieving the standards of representative governance and civil society required by international legislature. Whilst similarities may be found between unrecognised entities and other small states and newly independent nations (such as Kosovo), this should not translate into the belief that because one unrecognised entity has achieved a certain level of development, or implemented a certain model of governance, that it will be possible for all unrecognised entities to either achieve the same model of political development, or levels of political stability and coherence necessary for processes such as democratisation.

⁵³ Brendan O'Leary, 'Analysing Partition: Definition, Classification and Explanation', *MFPP Working Papers*, 27, (2006), pp. 1-7.

The politics of secession and unrecognised entities poses many a challenge to existing theories of the state in international relations and political science. When viewed as an interplay between two co-existing objects (the sovereign state and the unrecognised entity) many insufficiencies come to the fore. As Bartelson suggests, the state (as well as the unrecognised entity) ‘dissolves at closer inspection’,⁵⁴ if viewed as a unitary object, or actor. Therefore a study of the processes of secession should recognise that secession has historically occurred for different reasons (such as the opportunities presented by decolonisation during the second half of the Twentieth Century), and involves a plurality of actors and movements, strategies and ideologies, which lack any essential fixity or normative qualities. We may need definite bounds for the theorisation of secession but inevitably, upon closer inspection, such fixity ‘dissolves’ given the inchoate and pluralistic nature of political movements and the different interpretations of political mobilisation which influence our understanding of these issues. Of equal significance to a study of this type is the problem of assuming too great a level of distinction between unrecognised entities, the parent states of which they form a part, and the sovereign actors who influence and shape the political trajectory of these situations. A key weakness of existing literature on unrecognised entities is that they are too often conceptually isolated from interrelated trends in regional politics.

The case of Iraqi Kurdistan is used to highlight the extremely integrated political and economic position it is possible for an unrecognised entity to occupy within a regional context. This study attempts to depart from the view of unrecognised entities as pariah badlands, instead opting to analyse the character of these political communities and their ability to effectively engage in trade and external relations with sovereign states and other actors in ways which cannot be countermanded by the centralised apparatus of the metropolitan parent state. Existing theories of secession within the literature have failed to account for the effectiveness of unrecognised entities in maintaining their political and economic autonomy when actual processes of secession and separation are in abeyance, or have been halted altogether such as in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan. Thus, existing theory has failed to distinguish between secession and the devolution of power to autonomous actors in many examples. This thesis questions this apparent lack of

⁵⁴ Bartelson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 139.

theoretical flexibility within literature on unrecognised states and examines why some intellectual traditions have adopted a state-centric theoretical understanding of unrecognised entities despite the presence of pluralities and differences which signify a lack of conceptual fixity which has hitherto been left unexamined.

It should be noted that so little research has been produced on the subject of unrecognised entities that developing a theoretical framework from existing works (in what is a far from cohesive canon of literature) becomes a problematic endeavour; especially when theoretical analysis has, in the majority of works, been sidelined in favour of analysing the history and politics of these enclaves with a view to shedding light on their legal status and political existence in the international system. This is why a methodology based upon textual analysis of existing literature was established as essential for this study in order to examine the concepts of competing (and sometimes allied) theoretical approaches toward unrecognised entities.

Methodology

This study contributes to the theoretical analysis of unrecognised entities within a multidisciplinary framework. As such it is intended to increase analytic leverage available to political science, ethno-politics and international relations specialists when describing and explaining political phenomena surrounding unrecognised entities. The study assesses the efficacy of existing literature and scientific discourse in enhancing our theoretical understanding of political mobilisation in such phenomena. Thus the study examines and directly builds upon theories in existing literature by identifying inconsistencies within analytical concepts deployed within the field of research into unrecognised entities, thereby raising research questions aimed at reformulating existing approaches and identifying empirical cases for which existing theories struggle to account.

The political development of Iraqi Kurdistan is posited as a deviating case which requires the reformulation of existing theories and is selected as this study's primary unit of analysis. As a single case, Iraqi Kurdistan yields multiple observations which point to inelasticity and inconsistency within theories developed since the end of the Cold War to explain the form and function of unrecognised entities. The case of Iraqi Kurdistan

presents a paradigm of *de facto* independence which warrants its inclusion in mainstream debates concerning unrecognised (*de facto*) states due to its longevity in the international system, its degree of autonomy and independence from the state in which it resides, as well as its differentiated economic, political and institutional development from the rest of Iraq. Its omission from the definition and accepted cases of *de facto* states not only widens the conceptual parameters of definitions and terms used by academics to define unrecognised entities, but significantly undermines the theory with respect to the cases explicitly covered within existing definitions, such as Taiwan and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Therefore, in order to arrive at valid generalisations and theoretical conclusions, empirical differences between unrecognised entities and differences between the theoretical definitions of academics are acknowledged in order to produce new and unbiased assessments of theoretical conclusions found in existing literatures.

As a textual analysis the study is aimed at the theoretical refinement and improvement of our understanding of unrecognised entities as unique phenomena in the international system. It is therefore not a work of empirical rejection of earlier theoretical contributions but an excursus on alternative explanations which both integrate and eliminate existing theoretical approaches so that new theoretical frameworks may be proposed which increase the sub-discipline's analytical leverage. The study also examines the general character of theoretical hypotheses applied to unrecognised entities in international relations, political science, and security studies disciplines, and proposes alternative explanations of causal mechanisms which are not examined in the literature thus far. In doing so, this thesis redefines central arguments and accounts of observed empirical phenomena in unrecognised entities and political scenarios where issues of self-determination, autonomy, secession and ethno-nationalism coalesce to field challenges to conventional wisdom on intrastate conflicts as a prelude to secession and the creation of new states.

The work draws on a wide range of interpretative resources which are not confined to the realms of political science and international relations theories and epistemologies. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach to textual analysis within the subject matter, the study identifies common assumptions and generalisations applied to unrecognised entities. These assumptions are then examined to identify complementary

arguments and inconsistencies, thereby synthesising different theoretical contributions around alternative explanations for observed empirical patterns. The study, therefore, contributes to existing literature on unrecognised entities by consolidating theoretical knowledge on the subject, examining scientific discourses within the field, and clarifying conceptual attributes and empirical referents deployed within the sub discipline.

Discourse Analysis

This study adopts an approach to discourse which understands the concept as embedded in the clarification of the language use of thinkers and the meanings, ideas, statements and philosophies propagated by them⁵⁵. The focus of this study being problems of meaning within the textual output of scholars who focus their analytical energies on questions surrounding unrecognised entities in the international system, and the ways that meanings, concepts, structures and theoretical strategies have been produced and applied in relevant texts. As the primary research method employed by this study, discourse analysis is achieved by compiling a representative selection of texts on the particular issue of unrecognised “states”, identifying the dominant discourse (or discourses) within the field of study, then determining problematic areas of theoretical discourse which point to wider problems of typology and structure⁵⁶. Whilst this study does employ some of the methods and techniques common to the wider field of critical discourse analysis, it is not a study of theories of discourse or approaches to discourse analysis in its respective fields or sub-disciplinary categories. Through critical discourse analysis of a specific body of literature from international relations and political science disciplines, the thesis questions the way in which values have been transferred to the analytical concept of unrecognised entities by scholars from a range of disciplines. The benefit of a discursive methodology is that it enables the researcher to avoid discipline-specific constraints in a way which still allows for the detailed consideration of texts. This is important for when dealing with a subject such as unrecognised entities it is necessary to incorporate texts from a wide range of research genres into one’s analysis.

⁵⁵ Teun A. Van Dijk (ed.), ‘The Study of Discourse’, in Van Dijk (ed.), *Discourse as Structure and Process* (London: SAGE, 1997), p. 2.

⁵⁶ For an expanded summary of the methodologies associated with discourse analysis in political research see Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant and Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics* (Palgrave, 2004), pp. 246-249.

Critical discourse analysis is a process described by Fairclough as ‘...not [the] application of some pre-set code of principles, it is *praxis* and as such constantly reengages theory and practice in a continuously self-informing process of inquiry.’⁵⁷ This study follows the process described by Fairclough by reengaging theory and practice within its methodology, via the critical engagement with texts produced by area studies research into unrecognised entities since the end of the cold war. Through this process of engagement, the ‘historicity of discursive events’⁵⁸ and the ‘archaeology of knowledge and experience’⁵⁹ surrounding the analytical concept of the unrecognised “state” is clarified as the intentions of the author become contextualised. As a methodological approach, critical discourse analysis is well suited to the investigation of how scholars have made, or attempted to make, such complex political phenomena intelligible.

As a work of critical discourse analysis, this study adopts a diversity of focus with respect to the conceptual functions and levels of analysis employed by scholars researching the phenomena of unrecognised entities⁶⁰. This study looks at the emergence of scholarship in this area and questions the homogeneity which formed within the discursive apparatus used by thinkers to describe and contextualise the problem of the unrecognised “state”. As part of its critical engagement, the work identifies the intellectual basis for those ideas which subsequently came to dominate thinking on unrecognised entities, as well as the political and epistemological environments which greatly influenced the formation of the concept of the *de facto* state due to the security and policy requirements of international actors during specific historical periods. The immediate post-Cold War period is highlighted as a key phase in the development of the field due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the emergence of unrecognised entities in and among the independent republics which emerged thereafter. This thesis traces the development of discourses in post-Soviet studies, specifically the discourses surrounding the conceptualisation of *de facto* states, and identifies tensions between the act of repeated usage of terms and concepts from one area of analysis, and their wider application to global contexts over the long-term. As Mills argues, ‘A discursive

⁵⁷ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995), x.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

structure can be detected because of the systematicity of the ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving which are formed within a particular context, and because of the effects of those ways of thinking and behaving.’⁶¹ The repetition and re-creation of unrecognised “states” as *ideal types* in the works of scholars creates the very discursive structures described by Mills. These *ideal types*, or textual conventions, create pressures on the essential load-bearing concepts employed in international relations research, especially if critical engagement with the core concepts of analysis has been absent from processes of inquiry within the field.

Through intertextual analysis it is possible to question the conceptual homogeneity which has permeated the typologies developed in this field of study. It also enables the instrumental role of the academic as author, in defining the perspective from which the object of study is contextualised, to be opened up to scrutiny. As explained by Fairclough, critical discourse analysis ‘...ensures attention to the historicity of discursive events by showing both their continuity with the past (their dependence on given orders of discourse) and their involvement in making history (their remaking of orders of discourse).’⁶² Fairclough’s point is particularly salient in the context of the body of literature dedicated to explaining and examining unrecognised entities, as the conceptual apparatuses developed during the mid to late 1990s form a strong discursive continuity between works. This continuity partly explains the conceptual homogeneity which endures despite the presence of mixed genres and heterogeneous approaches within the field. It is this uncritical ‘remaking of orders of discourse’ which this study principally sets out to investigate through a close intertextual analysis aimed at identifying problems of theoretical engagement with unrecognised entities.

The formation of a methodological approach which uses critical discourse analysis for analytic leverage requires an appreciation of differences between texts. These differences manifest through genre, discipline, historical period, convention and purpose. All of these differences impact on the meaning of the text and the approach used to interpret and identify the discursive attributes most applicable to the study. Many works on unrecognised entities are a mixture of academic genres, methodologies and

⁶¹ Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 17.

⁶² Fairclough, *Op. Cit.*, p. 11

approaches spanning the period from 1990 to the present. It is therefore highly important to differentiate between the purpose of texts and the level of analysis represented by each case. Fairclough describes ‘configurations of genres’ which have ‘...become conventionalised for particular categories of activity in particular types of social [or academic] situation.’⁶³ He also argues that ‘A text type is situationally and historically quite particular, a genre is more abstract, though particular text types may be more or less generically complex’⁶⁴.

Fairclough’s appraisal is useful for understanding work on unrecognised entities as despite the employment of diverse methods and conceptual approaches; the field displays a clear historical particularity (alongside a generic complexity) with established conventions and configurations which have not received critical engagement. From the outset, this study identifies the particular historical conditions which shaped and formed attitudes toward the properties of unrecognised entities and the development of discourses which shaped international relations and political science understandings of the concept. As highlighted by Fairclough, many critical discourse analysts fail to adequately historicise their data (the text), and produce analysis which does not, on the one hand, make explicit the role of ‘historical conditions’ in shaping discourse, and on the other hand, specify the role of such discourses in wider historical processes⁶⁵. To avoid these problems this study grounds its intertextual analysis in the historical contexts specific to each work.

The thesis also assesses discursive processes which lie outside the specific production of meaning within academic literature. As a study grounded in political and developmental processes observable in Iraqi Kurdistan and the region in which it is situated, this thesis discusses discourses associated with the creation of autonomous Kurdish politics in northern Iraq since the end of the first Gulf War in 1991. The economic development of Iraqi Kurdistan analysed in chapter five is an important case study as the discourses of power and political change articulated within the political rehabilitation of Iraqi Kurdistan are widely publicised through Kurdish media channels and have been the subject of increasing academic scrutiny since the 2003 invasion of

⁶³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

Iraq. The political economy of Iraqi Kurdistan highlights many areas where research into unrecognised entities has not shown the necessary capacity to incorporate cases which challenge the *ideal types* and case-specific definitions developed in the 1990s. Marketisation and economic change is discussed to highlight the emergence of a new public discourse in Kurdish society, one which reflects changing societal identity in response to federal recognition and one which possesses an international character which is arguably unique.

Note on Definitions

For the sake of clarity it is necessary to include a brief note on the definitions used throughout this thesis.

The terms ‘unrecognised entity’, ‘unrecognised political entity’, ‘unrecognised *state-like* entity’, ‘autonomous entity’, ‘autonomous political entity’ (and derivations thereof) are used, where appropriate, to make a conceptual move away from the terms ‘*de facto* state’, ‘quasi-state’, ‘semi-state’ and other designations found in existing literature to define unrecognised entities and *de facto* independent regions which function and operate in the international system but lack formal recognition of their sovereignty.

The use of the term ‘unrecognised **entity**’ and not ‘unrecognised state’ is part of the conceptual model of the thesis in that core hypotheses are based on the problem of associating ambiguous and problematic political scenarios with states and statehood – two independent qualifications which are not yet attained or possessed by an unrecognised entity. The terminology selected to describe the phenomenon in question is designed to avoid equivalence with the state (as a unit of international organisation) and recognises that the theoretical problem in focus is too fluid and imprecise to be cast as a unitary actor equivalent (at the objective level) to a sovereign state. The term ‘state-like’ is therefore used to differentiate between the object of study (ambiguous and unrecognised entities) and the concept being superimposed onto it (the concept of state).

The designation ‘ambiguous’ is used in this context to denote a changeable and ill-defined status, which includes unrecognised status, and one in which each unrecognised entity presents a unique and ambiguous case for which we cannot produce or employ exactly the same meaning in each of them.

The term ‘entity’ has a specific meaning within this thesis and is used to describe a *de facto* independent system (or systems) of governance, or a *de facto* independent region, which has no formal status or *de jure* legitimacy in international politics, and remains conceptually ill-defined. The use of the term *entity* is not intended to be controversial or perfunctory in its depoliticising effect on the object of study; rather it is intended to increase the theoretical and conceptual leverage available to the author throughout the study.

2. Unrecognised Entities as Analytical Concepts: Problems in International Relations and Political Science Approaches

One of the major problems encountered by researchers is that unrecognised entities still fall between the gap which arises at the intersection of political science and international relations epistemologies, with the effect that these ambiguous political scenarios receive the worst conceptual treatment from both disciplines as a result. Political scientists might know how to engage with the ontology and empirical dynamics of unrecognised entities, but often they do not know very much about international relations theory. Conversely, the traditional international relations preoccupation with sovereignty and *de jure* statehood often inhibits a more nuanced reading of the complicated socio-political realities that exist within unrecognised entities and the intrastate conflicts which often lie inside and in close proximity to them. There are further problems in that by far the greatest portion of analysis into unrecognised entities has focused on separatist *de facto* states in Eurasia and the Caucasus, namely Nagorno Karabakh, Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and the metropolitan “parent” states from which they have seceded. This has had the unfortunate effect of tethering the study of unrecognised entities to specific post-Soviet geographic and political examples which are not necessarily a comparative conceptual fit with the Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq which forms the main case study of this thesis.

Precipitation of the Problem in Conceptual Literature

To compile a list of contemporary scholarship on unrecognised entities is, for the main part, to compile a bibliography on post-Soviet political developments in Eurasia and the Caucasus. Because of this regional focus, unrecognised entities which lie outside these Eurasian contexts have been rendered a comparative adjunct with scarcely more than cursory attention being paid to the relevant challenges provided by Iraqi Kurdistan and other examples. In tethering analysis of ‘unrecognised states’ to a post-Soviet regional focus (both in terms of empirical analysis and charting the historical emergence of

separatist entities during the 1990s) leads many writings on the Eurasian / Caucasian “*de facto* states” to normative, repetitive and arguably passé conclusions which are of limited utility when used to tackle the empirically divergent and constantly evolving international politics of unrecognised entities. Throughout the corpus of literature dealing with these entities one will find them referred to as ‘*de facto*’, ‘failed’, ‘pseudo-’, ‘neo-’, ‘unrecognised’, ‘quasi-’, ‘semi-’ states and entities. The numerous subtle differences between all of these designations has created a situation where the handful of academics dedicated to the study of this phenomenon have charted their own respective courses through available political science and international relations theories to arrive at a point where normative assumptions and causal generalisations can be attempted to explain the position of these entities in international society.

From the outset, therefore, the question of unrecognised entities becomes a question of terminology, which in turn greatly depends on the degree of conceptual fixity within the subject matter. This leads to a complex morphological terrain of contested terminologies used to define what already represents an ambiguous and inherently unstable concept. Conceptual fixity is unfortunately assumed in the majority of cases due to the limited body of literature which exists on unrecognised entities and the way in which these entities have been defined *ad lib* by academics out of sheer necessity. It is questionable whether the level of conceptual fixity which has been assumed and applied in the study of unrecognised entities sufficiently explains the contradictory and very often surprising political developments which occur where unrecognised entities are found. The fact that many of these entities have remained in a state of illegitimacy for nearly two decades, yet some academics still contend that they function better than their parent states¹, leaves an un-tackled paradox at the very centre of the debate on unrecognised entities and their place in the international system.

¹ See Scott Pegg, ‘De Facto States in the International System,’ *Institute of International Relations – University of British Columbia*, Working Paper No. 21, (1998); Scott Pegg, *International Society and the De Facto State* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); Dov Lynch, *Engaging Eurasia’s Separatist States* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2004); Pål Kolstø, ‘The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States,’ *Journal of Peace Research*, 43:6 (2006), 723-740; Pål Kolstø & Helge Blakkisrud, ‘Living with Non-recognition: State- and Nation-building in South Caucasian Quasi-states,’ *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60:3, (May 2008), pp. 483-509.

Recourse to the comparative study of cases drawn from the Eurasian/Caucasian paradigms has become an integral component of academic analysis into so-called '*de facto* states' and this is not due to any dearth or lack of examples to be found in the wider international system. The field of research into unrecognised entities has been driven by scholars whose principal focus has been on a high profile grouping of unrecognised entities in Eurasia, the Caucasus and a cluster of more marginal, region-specific, post-Soviet contexts (such as the brief existence of a break-away republic in Chechnya). It follows that those scholars who have so far driven academic research on *de facto* states have failed, perhaps unwittingly, to build theories that accommodate developments in other parts of the world where the presence of unrecognised entities in the interstate system is felt. For example, the emergence of northern Iraq as an autonomous Kurdish sphere of influence, and then a fully functioning autonomy regime, has received scant attention from scholars leading research on *de facto* states. This gap in analysis can be attributed to the analytical tendency to portray the *de facto* state as predominantly a Eurasian / Caucasian construct, first and foremost, whereas examples like Iraqi Kurdistan merely confuse the debate given that they present a set of variations on the established theme and are not easily accommodated by the definitions set-out in post-Soviet analysis on unrecognised entities. Although Iraqi Kurdistan is a solitary example of an unrecognised entity in the Middle East, it nonetheless represents an important case which challenges the theoretical frameworks currently applied by scholars to unrecognised entities the world over.

This thesis presents the argument that a new theoretical synthesis on unrecognised entities and autonomous territories is long overdue. It argues that that scholars should begin to consider how the dominant ethno-political strategies which underlie processes of *de facto* independence are driven at a grassroots level, not purely in political science or international relations terms, but in a more crucial or imaginative sense which deals with the functions of these entities as actors and stakeholders in territorial revision, political change and structural upheaval within the fabric of global politics. The argument identifies a set of assumptions which have been laid down within international relations, security studies and political science discourses that define, albeit poorly, the phenomenon of the unrecognised state and its place in the international system. In other

words, scholarly opinion has laid down a set of principles, value judgements, criteria, and categorisations which must be satisfied if an unrecognised entity is to be qualified as a *de facto* state. The principles, or ‘aesthetics’, by which the *de facto* state is defined, have become fixed. However, there is a problem with such a set of fixed defining principles when we try and make these aesthetic qualifications fit all unrecognised entities in a one-size-fits-all manner. It clearly does not work and for the most part research on *de facto* states in the Eurasian paradigm is of little comparative use when, for example, one looks at the dynamics of Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq.

No two unrecognised entities display the same set of political, social and economic realities. Yet the aesthetic impact of unrecognised autonomous mobilisation and territorial revision through ethno-political conflict are highly potent and destabilising forces within the international political, economic, and diplomatic landscape wherever unrecognised entities are to be found. The point can be made clearer still if it is recognised that the unrecognised entity, as a unit of political mobilisation, is continually driving forward and evolving new strategies and that this evolution is a regular feature of their survival strategies in the international system - especially when the stigma of illegitimacy is ever present as a factor which militates against normalised political relations within the international state system. The term ‘unrecognised *entity*’ used throughout this study is unlike the designation ‘*de facto* state’ in not being a vehicle for positivist pronouncements on the future of territorial revision and the creation of new states after the Cold War. In an era of increasing intrastate (internal) conflict and political turbulence, the potential emergence of new and as yet unimagined unrecognised political entities remains a reality highly neglected by academics and policymakers alike. Our understanding of the physics of intrastate conflict and state disintegration requires a new theoretical stance on the function of unrecognised entities, so that new strategies to accommodate these units into the international political and economic nexus can be proposed and conflicts managed fluidly.

Reformulating Mainstream Discourse

Unrecognised, illegitimate or unlawful *de facto* independence has come to represent a degenerate isolationism for unrecognised entities which goes hand-in-hand with tropes of

ethnic war, corruption, sleazy elite activity, warlordism, and shadowy criminal economics. This vision of autonomy-in-motion casts the unrecognised entity as disinterested and adventurist cut off from the legitimate and condemned to a future as a criminalised badland, a place of insecurity and ethno-political introspection in need of border patrols to prevent the outside from getting in.² Whilst in recent years there has been a move away from the image of ‘criminalised badlands’, *de facto* independence by sub-national minorities is widely assumed to have an allergy to anything legitimate and is routinely constructed as a security threat. This particular discourse on unrecognised entities deserves a reputation for being the product of realist international relations theory and for loading the dice in favour of state-centrism, having tarred nearly all unrecognised entities with the same disparaging forecast made for those in Eurasia and the Caucasus during the period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Similar forecasts are routinely made for other ambiguous state-like entities depending on the political climate of the moment.

Viewed from an alternate perspective, the unrecognised entity is autonomy-as-independence, which is, in a certain way of thinking about it, not just the essence of the entrepreneurship behind autonomous mobilisation, but a form of autonomous mobilisation that excels at providing functions so often assumed to be the sole preserve of the state. When operative the unrecognised entity is capable of functioning extremely effectively, and this has led some scholars to generalise that it is supposedly as good as a state. Iraqi Kurdistan, for instance, comes off better than most of its contemporaries in this regard. However we should be extremely wary of taking equivalence with statehood too far as unrecognised entities operate within a different set of political (and conceptual) parameters which preclude the attainment of statehood. Central to the argument presented here is developing an understanding of how the unrecognised entity has been misrepresented by its apologists and critics alike. Indeed, there is now a pressing need for a theoretical and conceptual revision of the autonomy of unrecognised entities which gives greater depth of analysis to examples in other parts of the world over the post-Soviet examples which have so far dominated scholarship in this field of research.

² See Charles King, ‘The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia’s Unrecognised States,’ *World Politics*, 53, (2001).

The majority of interdisciplinary analysis on unrecognised entities has focused on Eurasia and the Caucasus, a tradition which still dominates thinking on the problem and one which draws heavily on Scott Pegg's international relations formulations of *de facto* statehood. The descriptive qualifications Pegg attached to the problem were quickly transferred to a post-Soviet context by Dov Lynch³, which in turn led to a perspective on unrecognised entities as secessionist entities vis-à-vis the wars of Soviet succession⁴. Pegg, in a paper on unrecognised entities entitled *De Facto States in the International System* (1998) defines the 'de facto state' as:

...a secessionist entity that receives popular support and has achieved sufficient capacity to provide governmental services to a given population in a defined territorial area, over which it maintains effective control over an extended period of time.⁵

Through the course of his analysis, Pegg introduces us to many other parameters and variables which have the potential to either enhance or limit the trajectory of a *de facto* state's existence. These are variables not included in Pegg's definition such as size, limited numbers, economic conditions, war, and a lack of juridical standing. It can, therefore, be argued that Pegg's quoted definitions encompass little more than half of the causal circle by which unrecognised entities are able to define or situate themselves in the international system. Pegg's definitions have been satisfactory until now as they have served the needs of scholars and policymakers whose attentions have been firmly fixed on questions of international law, legitimacy, effective governance and the fragmentation of hegemonic structures in post-Soviet Eurasian/Caucasian contexts.

The fact that not all unrecognised entities represent secessionist entities; that they do not all possess a defined territorial area; and that effective control is not always maintained over this territory for an extended period has been overlooked in most analysis and, until now, the limitations within Pegg's definitions have remained unchallenged. In other words, by limiting his definition of the *de facto* state to the normative language of quantitative and formally measurable criteria, Pegg overburdens

³See Dov Lynch, Op. Cit.

⁴ Charles King, Op. Cit.

⁵ Scott Pegg, 'De Facto States in the International System,' *Institute of International Relations, University of British Columbia*, Working Paper No.21, 1998, p. 1.

the main load-bearing element of his thesis as his inquiry diversifies. This is proof that by their very ambiguous nature unrecognised entities are poorly served by current normative international relations and political science definitions. The conceptual ambiguity of unrecognised entities is an affront to realist theory as they cannot be explained with precision through definitions of sovereignty, statehood, territory and international law alone. Pegg's definition represents a genuine insight but it cannot be generalised indiscriminately (as it has been within the limited available literature on unrecognised entities) to impugn unrecognised or illegitimate entities that do not fall within the rigid parameters and principles he sets out to define the *de facto* state. This is why the term '*de facto* state' now needs to be recognised as representing a concept from a particular moment in international relations and political science thinking.

The unrecognised entity has not been integrated into the international system and therefore it should be distinguished from both the system and the system's primary unit of organisation – the state. To rethink autonomy, specifically the subjective and idealised autonomy and *de facto* independence encountered in unrecognised entities, means challenging the old, and still dominant, idea that unrecognised entities exist in a form of isolation or withdrawal from international society. They are a symbolic part of its very fabric. This de-worlded vision of the *de facto* state, so common throughout the Eurasian paradigm, was crystallised by Pål Kolstø's paper *The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States* (2006).⁶ By setting 'failed states' in diametric opposition to 'quasi-states', defined by the latter's illegitimacy, reliance on propaganda, identity-building and channelling meagre resources into military defence, Kolstø set the seal on failure to achieve international recognition as existential apartness. For Kolstø, the quasi-state's autonomy corresponds to political transience or a prelude to full independence or, alternatively, disappearance through a variety of means, which he bases on examples drawn from the Eurasian paradigms and the former Yugoslavia. For Kolstø it matters little whether or not the quasi-state (or *de facto* state) hankers after recognition, apartness or integration as all eventual outcomes will be based on compromise. His position attributes little recognition to the power of autonomy movements as it gives no credence

⁶ Pål Kolstø, 'The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States,' *Journal of Peace Research*, 43:6, 2006, pp. 723-740

to strategy or the complex ways in which groups struggle to project their identities on local, regional and international platforms. Again Kolstø's work is a good example of how international relations and area studies discourses conceptually isolate the unrecognised entity from the international state system for the sake of conjecture.

The unrecognised entity is greatly influenced by the decentralising power of *de facto* independence despite the fact that all such entities have inherited parameters, both physical and political, which are normally transgressed repeatedly. Inherited parameters have not, for example, prevented Iraq's Kurds taking responsibility for and taking control of all those internal dynamics which impinged on or interfered with the transition from protected enclave to *de facto* autonomy. This is precisely due to the way in which this manifestation of Kurdish *de facto* autonomy in northern Iraq is expansive, that is to say, it possesses the radical dynamism necessary to move from crisis zone to state-like autonomy, albeit unrecognised.

Escaping the "Prison House" of International Relations

There has been no substantial theoretical debate on the fundamental processes which fuelled the development of *de facto* independence in the cases of the unrecognised entities which emerged in Eurasia and the Caucasus. This has left many unanswered questions surrounding why some unrecognised entities endure in a state of illegitimacy, and others disappear irretrievably through either reabsorption into the parent state, or recognition. If we recognise that the unrecognised entity does not exist in isolation from underlying political, ideological and communal dynamics in the interstate system, and that *de facto* independence thrives under transformed territorial, social and institutional circumstances, then why has there been no revision to the conceptual treatment of unrecognised entities in international relations and political science inquiry? The answer may lie in the fact that a more multidisciplinary focus is needed to remove unrecognised entities from the theoretical tyranny of international politics and international relations discourses which remain preoccupied with sovereignty and sovereign states as the principal units of political authority in the international system. Étatist schools of international relations have made apparent the aesthetic distinction between 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable' in their differentiation between forms of sovereignty. Richard

Devetak lends a critical eye to what he terms ‘The dogmatic prioritisation of the political over the moral’ in his essay *Between Kant and Pufendorf: humanitarian intervention, statist anti-cosmopolitanism and critical international theory* (2007). In this work Devetak engages many key points of critical international theory which, although fielded outside the context of unrecognised entities, nonetheless remain important. He argues:

[...] politics is often the clash between different value rationalities or moral criteria for judging practices and policies. We might say that politics is defined by the fact that it is never autonomous, never entirely closed in on itself, never finally separated from the moral, legal, economic and even aesthetic spheres... Morgenthau recognised that ‘the political sphere (like all others) is in reality never pure, and that all spheres interpenetrate in ways that reflect the structures of power and interest operating in different ways at different times and places’⁷

Applying Devetak’s omni-directional analysis in the context of *de facto* independent unrecognised entities helps us take account of an ever expanding range of forces and influences which act upon these entities. This enables us to embed a variety of possible developmental outcomes and ambiguous state-like scenarios into their social, cultural and ethno-political contexts, bringing the advantages associated with a more multidisciplinary approach into our academic analysis.

Alternatively, through the process of refiguring the meaning and function of the unrecognised entity in contemporary scholarship, we deepen the notion of the unrecognised entity’s autonomy in the context of globalisation – as an actor in a globalised world – providing an expansion of the conceptual scope of these entities which is simply not available within the field of study as it stands. The degree to which the unrecognised entity’s assumed autonomy is defined by the exclusion from consideration of certain types of information is made clear by the limited scope of Pegg’s definition and the alteration of earlier designations by Kolstø. If *de facto* independence is defined through a less constrained causal continuum, the unrecognised entity becomes reconfigured in terms of autonomous agency as opposed to being defined as the product of rigid and limiting constraints imposed by anachronistic international conventions which seek to either constrain the potential of territorial revision or steer autonomy movements within unrecognised entities toward the pursuit of legal sovereignty as a form

⁷Richard Devetak, ‘Between Kant and Pufendorf: humanitarian intervention, statist anti-cosmopolitanism and critical international theory’, *Review of International Studies*, 33, 2007, 151-174

of default reflex. The problematic discourses which emerge out of analysis focusing on the post-Soviet unrecognised entities seemingly protects the interests of realist international relations theory (by excluding ambiguous structures of political mobilisation) instead of extending our comprehension of non-state autonomy beyond the twin pillars of sovereignty and legitimacy. Scholars such as Kolstø have portrayed the unrecognised entity as an ethno-political hegemony which requires recognition so that it may realise an appointed destiny.⁸ Whilst this view is only held by a few scholars, such portrayals are rarely, if ever, analysed as conjectures in light of the fact that many unrecognised entities will fail to attain *de jure* recognition and may not seek recognition as the most expedient outcome for interest groups and stakeholders within their borders. It can be argued that the pre-recognition struggle for self-determination and autonomy (both cultural and ideological) has always been an important catalyst for conflict, as well as being a maker of states. However, with so few states created through secession in the contemporary period there is a pressing need for a re-evaluation of the notion that unrecognised entities are states ‘in waiting’ or states ‘in all but name’, as they may be neither.

A problem arises when we assume that the end to which an unrecognised entity’s legitimizing strategies are aimed is to be just like a *de jure* sovereign. It is highly questionable to assume that the unrecognised entity democratises or liberalises for the express purpose of gaining recognition (or some other measure of legitimacy) from the international club of states. Writers such as Pegg once portrayed unrecognised entities as so desperate to prove their capacity to govern, so desperate to be bestowed with legitimacy that they have been described as being forced to resort to ‘playing yesterday’s game’⁹ in their bid to convince the international community of their right to statehood. This argument is far from persuasive because unrecognised entities endure illegitimacy and survive in asymmetric political conditions by methods which render recognition an aesthetic luxury. It is at this point that we reach the intersection between international relations and other disciplines on this issue. International relations discourse on *de facto* states has provided us with the idealised picture that all unrecognised entities desire, or

⁸ See Pål Kolstø & Helge Blakkisrud, ‘Living with Non-recognition: State- and Nation-building in South Caucasian Quasi-states,’ *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60:3, (May 2008), pp. 483-509.

⁹ Scott Pegg, *International Society and the De Facto State* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998) p. 128; 148-9

intend, to become fully legitimate sovereign states, with the entire realist theoretical schema that this picture entails.

A more pessimistic diagnosis was delivered between 1998 and 2004 by academics, from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, operating from within the paradigm of the post-Soviet unrecognised entities, yet the same aesthetic representation of unrecognised states is adhered to. For example Dov Lynch, in his book *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States* (2004), urges the international community to set Eurasia's conflicts (especially those centred around unrecognised entities) on the path to settlement as otherwise 'The conflicts will not resolve themselves, and the de facto states will not disappear of their own volition.'¹⁰ This statement implies, rightly or wrongly, that the *de facto* state and unrecognised state-like scenarios are a destabilizing force within Eurasia, and one that the international community could well do without if it wishes to mitigate its strategic risk. Lynch goes on to suggest that the Eurasian zone of the former Soviet Union will be 'confirmed as a zone of strategic risk, emitting a constant pulse of instability while slowly collapsing internally.'¹¹ In addition, Charles King's paper entitled *The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognised States* (2001) concludes on a similarly pessimistic note:

Peace has now become something like a public good, an outcome from which all groups might potentially benefit but which entails some sacrifice from all interested parties. Just as the political economy of war can perpetuate violence, so too the institutions of Eurasia's unrecognized states have ensured that the benefits born of conflict continue to accrue to belligerents on both sides, the erstwhile losers as well as the beginners.¹²

King goes on to argue that solutions which offer the international community the most diplomatic cover will, most likely, fail to 'alter the basic structure of power...[and] would simply legitimise the continued division of these states into areas controlled by central governments and areas where their writ does not run.'¹³ The problems identified by King hint at the existence of pressing conceptual problems residing at the very heart of the

¹⁰ Dov Lynch, *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2004) p. 143.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Charles King, 'The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognised States,' *World Politics*, 53 (2001), p. 550.

¹³ Ibid., p. 551

treatment of unrecognised entities in international politics. King ends his paper with a warning that the peripheral existence of Eurasia's unrecognised entities is not a viable dynamic in which to build democratic governance.

Scholars such as Kolstø and Blakkisrud reject King's argument, instead preferring to promote the thesis that the ethnic purity found in some unrecognised entities is itself a catalyst for pluralistic democracy. They contend that, 'According to social philosophers such as John Stuart Mill (1859) and Robert Dahl (1971), pluralistic democracy will develop more readily in [ethnically] homogenous societies than in divided ones.'¹⁴ This ethnocentric angle on the problem can be discredited not least due to its legitimising effect on the pursuit of ethnic war, but also for the fact that in the case of unrecognised entities neither pluralistic democracy or ethnic purity are sufficient prerequisites for recognition. King suggests that current dynamics 'call into question the academic lenses through which researchers have viewed the problems of intrastate war.'¹⁵ This point appears to have been ignored within subsequent scholarship on unrecognised entities. King's assertion that Western policy interest in the Balkans and the Caucasus made unrecognised entities a matter of interest within security studies is of particular importance as it goes some way to explaining why the concept continues to be defined in terms of security, law, conflict management, and a state-centric international relations discourse. The conceptual problem may be that in actuality it is autonomy and mechanisms of independence in these cases which is *de facto*, rather than the state or the case for a state.

Definitions which emphasise the perfunctory position of unrecognised entities, and categorisations that relegate these entities to the periphery of international society have so far hindered the emergence of a more nuanced approach to the *de facto* independence possessed by these entities. This implies the need for a new analytical framework through which we can redefine the position of these entities in both the international and interstate systems. Conventional wisdom holds that separatist groups and secessionist movements threaten the territorial integrity of states whose primary desire is to maintain their own borders and safeguard their economic resources. Realist wisdom would hold that the balance of power (i.e. the relative power of the host state to

¹⁴ Pål Kolstø & Helge Blakkisrud, 'Living with Non-recognition: State- and Nation-building in South Caucasian Quasi-states', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60:3, May 2008, p. 506.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

inhibit secession) will also determine the success or failure of separatist movements, as well as the level of external support received for the seceding territory. It is questionable whether the cases studied within the Eurasian/Caucasian context carry the universal utility to be representative of the dominant strategies of all unrecognised entities. Thus the application of conventional approaches based upon realist theory struggle to provide the necessary elasticity or scope for the internal physics of intrastate conflict to be studied in new theoretical and conceptual contexts. Even political science analysis within a Eurasian context, such as the thesis proposed by King, is ambiguous in a theoretical sense as it relies on grounding the empirical, and the comparative, within undefined parameters. Many of the claims made about unrecognised entities are, therefore, lacking in conceptual detail and still remain unchallenged in academic analysis. Mainstream discourses on unrecognised entities have not developed a critical conceptual approach to the international relations of intrastate conflict or, indeed, a framework for examining how complex processes and functions of *de facto* independence define an unrecognised entity's existence. Many questions remain unasked, especially those pertaining to dynamics which sustain ideology, identity, power, and political mobilisation within unrecognised entities. Perhaps the most pressing problem is how can we flux or bend the concept of the unrecognised entity so that it no longer represents do-it-yourself statecraft but a more theoretically and conceptually distinct whole.

The point here is not to adopt any particular epistemological position but to rethink the primacy of legitimacy seeking and debates on *de jure* sovereignty, to instead turn our attention to the unwritten rules, tensions, divisions and fractured landscapes of the contemporary international society in which unrecognised entities thrive. Legitimacy, as a value judgement, has become utterly contentious. Instead of representing a holistic conceptual framework from international relations theory, one in which subjective capacities to govern and reasons for statehood are measured, legitimacy has been fragmented. No judgement of legitimacy can be made without it being compared with equivalent judgements made by people with different ethno-political, gender, class, regional, geographic, political, economic or cultural inscriptions. This is why the continuous remapping of political identity and space has led to the disaggregation of legitimacy from established dialectics, as well as a subtle decline in the fortunes of

territorial nation states. No single code or measurement of legitimacy can now be asserted because this would always be thought of, within the post-modern conditions associated with the hermeneutics of governance, as privileging one sector of society, or political ideology above all others. It is, therefore, quite startling that unrecognised entities have been defined in terms that lack any hint of relativism – aesthetic, theoretical, empirical, scientific or otherwise. If a new approach which recognises the importance of unrecognised entities and other territorial revisions leads to a greater level of theoretical relativism, it is only because the paradigms of realist and neo-realist international relations theory (which have deemed legitimacy and sovereignty to be prerequisite and commodified) have been made transparent and open to critique by problematic scenarios which challenge the universality of sovereignty.

The image of the unrecognised entity striding toward democracy, earned sovereignty and internationally acceptable methodologies is, in the face of critical analysis, a naïve and unrealistic tableau which harks back to classical notions of standards, status and the moral virtues of recognition and legitimacy. International relations, as a discipline has been slow to develop the contemporary critical approaches which exist in other disciplines. There is an urgent need for a critical, interdisciplinary analysis of unrecognised entities – one which escapes the inertia of state-bound approaches. The unrecognised entity, therefore, requires analysis through conceptual frameworks which draw on relevant critical and theoretical approaches developed in the humanities and social sciences. This will allow for a more synchronised interdisciplinary debate, and one which may provide a means of escape from “The Prison House of IR.”¹⁶

Rethinking the Ontology of Unrecognised Entities

Unrecognised entities exist as a functional component of a global interdependency - one which has had a significant impact upon how their politics contributes to shaping the politics of the contemporary world. Despite their illegitimacy and unrecognised status, these enigmatic entities remain part of the fabric of the international system despite the conceptual illegitimacy it is possible to superimpose upon them if they are regarded from a state-centric theoretical schema. It is of questionable relevance whether or not their

¹⁶ James Der Derian (ed.), *International Theory: Critical Investigations* (London: Palgrave, 1995), viii

shadow economies, violent internal dynamics, and endemic corruption obstruct the road to statehood. Statehood is a secondary concern as the processes of post-modern technologies, networks, and the operation of informal markets now necessitate the inclusion of unrecognised entities into the wider economic and political nexus of international society. The theories of realists, neoclassical realists, and the empirical dogmatism of positivists do not yet provide the conceptual shift necessary for a twenty-first century appreciation of how unrecognised entities endure over the long term. So how can we better understand such an ambiguous phenomenon if unrecognised entities are continually portrayed through the now antique frames of Westphalian sovereignty, European liberalism, and territorial contiguity? It can be argued that comparative debates on sovereignty, legitimacy and status in the international order have merely served to shore up state-centric discourses from which a great many theoretical questions continue to remain unanswered. Fortunately, unrecognised entities are gradually being recognised as a great deal more than criminalised badlands, or threats to security around which a multitude of actors compete and jockey for geo-political influence.

Unrecognised states in Eurasia, Africa and the Middle East perform arterial functions in the circulation of the global shadow economy, such as providing informal trade hubs for illicit markets, arms proliferation, and trafficking in narcotics and people. They also act as clearing houses for black market goods often with a level of complicit involvement by their 'legitimate' neighbours¹⁷. As geo-economic units, unrecognised states often occupy areas and regions of political, strategic, and logistical importance for the transportation of resources and are closely monitored by security studies specialists and policymakers in this regard. John T. Picarelli adopted a *post-international* (sic.) approach to what he termed the 'nexus' of trans-national organised crime and, in doing so, touched upon an issue at the heart of the problem with state-like entities. Picarelli's analysis of organised crime attempted to escape the 'international level' of analysis so

¹⁷ Iraqi Kurdistan was once described as the biggest black-market clearing house for cigarette smuggling in the Middle East. See Chris Hedges, 'Kurdish Smugglers Blow Smoke Rings over Northern Iraq,' *New York Times* (Online), August 17, 1994.

often adhered to by political scientists and international relations experts through their use of what he terms the rationalist ‘methods not motives’ argument¹⁸.

The challenge, according to Picarelli, was to find a theoretical framework for the analysis of trans-national organised crime that considered the individual, the organisational, *and* the international in equal measure. Picarelli’s turn toward Rosenau’s *post-international* (sic.) ‘Turbulence Theory’ allowed him to attack realism’s ignorance of domestic actors, and liberalism’s deference to the primacy of states¹⁹. It is a similar lack of theoretical traction within the post-Cold War consensus on *de facto* states which has driven this discussion’s call for a micro-level analysis of processes at work in unrecognised entities. Just as Picarelli searched for an alternative to state-centric approaches toward organised crime, a deepening of our theoretical foci on unrecognised entities is needed, one which responds to questions which fall outside the framework of debates on democratisation and legitimacy, but also looks toward questions of sub-national, trans-national and intrastate dynamics within a framework of transition and transformation. Unrecognised states bring many additional actors to our attention if viewed through a similar *post-international* (sic.) lens to the one used by Picarelli.

As noted earlier, classical assumptions and generalisations rarely contain sufficient theoretical or conceptual elasticity for the accommodation of diverse non-state actors within the theoretical schema of liberalism and (structural) realism by privileging states. Picarelli suggests that *post-internationalism* (sic.) is able to ‘[move] beyond this inequality by categorising two sets of actors based on their relationship to sovereignty.’²⁰ He takes this argument further by noting:

Sovereignty is the basic organising principle of the Westphalian state system, and can be defined as the exclusive right to exercise supreme authority over a geographic region or a group of people. The basic question is this – is the internal organisation of a group geared towards obtaining and exercising sovereignty in a defined area or does the group operate according to another internal compass? States serve as the perfect example of an actor characterised by its binding to the principle of sovereignty, and thus states and actors like them are referred to as sovereign bound. The other category of actors is composed of individuals and groups who do not consider sovereignty as the primary ideational compass for their organisational

¹⁸ John T. Picarelli, ‘The Turbulent Nexus of Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism: A Theory of International Relations,’ *Global Crime*, 7:1, 2006, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6

²⁰ Picarelli, *Op. Cit.*, p. 10

composition, and thus these actors are deemed “sovereign-free.” The realm of sovereign-free actors includes a wide range of actors, ranging from super-empowered individuals to sub-national groups to multinational corporations.²¹

Picarelli’s analysis is highly important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the unrecognised entity is a challenge to Westphalian criteria on sovereignty when viewed through the theoretical prism of post-positivist and post-structuralist thought. This challenge is now a well established theoretical departure from classical conventions but the difference here is that Picarelli’s use of Rosenau’s *post-international* (sic.) framework recognises the capacity for groups to coalesce around an ideational (or ideological) compass different to that necessitated for the pursuit of *de jure* sovereignty alone. Secondly, in unrecognised entities we can observe how political actors buy into, or are co-opted by a desire to exercise sovereignty at a state governance level despite the complexities this entails. Hence a great deal of the political analysis which has surfaced in post-Cold War analysis of unrecognised entities has focused on the competition between dominant actors in their search to become ‘sovereign-bound’, to quote Picarelli’s earlier argument.

However, integral to any discussion of unrecognised entities should be an appreciation of how the dynamic of managing *de facto* independence is but one of many internal interactions at the group level. Therefore, there is not only competition between groups over internal sovereignty and other derivations of power within an unrecognised entity, but there are often proximate groups and actors whose organisational composition and ideational compass serves the maintenance of their ability to remain ‘sovereign-free’²². One should caution against diametric oppositions between sovereign-bound and sovereign-free groupings, but in the case of unrecognised entities – ambiguous scenarios whose very existence has often been facilitated through violent intrastate conflict – the sheer range of actors and the state-like nature of some unrecognised entities necessitate continual dialogue, bargaining and interaction between political / economic stakeholders and other interest groupings. Through this realisation, the post-realist approach proposed by Rosenau offers far more theoretical latitude than traditional international relations discourses through an ability to encompass relational dynamics such as control, authority,

²¹ Picarelli, Op. Cit., pp. 10-11.

²² An example of the desire to remain ‘sovereign free’ is the political presence of the Kurdistan Workers Party / *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (PKK) as an actor in the mountainous regions bordering Turkey.

setting and how organisational composition changes over time according to need. Change is, as noted earlier, a concept central to Rosenau's *post-international* theory (sic.). In the context of unrecognised entities, change is always pre-empted as the actors and groups within their confines respond to the need to exercise control without legitimacy, *de jure* recognition, or defined territorial authority.

That is the crux. It is highly problematic to superimpose a realist theoretical framework onto the unrecognised entity (as scholars have repeatedly attempted) without the theoretical and conceptual paucity so far encountered in writings forming the literary canon of analysis on *de facto*/unrecognised states. A critical essay by Martin Wright entitled 'Why is there no International Theory?' (1966) delivered a contentious yet erudite appraisal of the then 'scattered, unsystematic, and inaccessible' state of international theory which shed some further light on the problems we encounter when dealing with existing literature on *de facto* states. Wright's critique of international relations theories takes issue with the fact that scholars of international issues have often been reliant on limited variations of realism, the intellectual prejudices of state-centric discourse, and a blind faith in 'progress' when it comes to tackling new and emergent problems in international politics. Wright argues: 'The principle that every individual requires the protection of a state, which represents him in the international community, is a juristic expression of the belief in the sovereign state as the consummation of political experience and activity which has marked Western political thought since the Renaissance.'²³

It is all too evident that scholars dealing with the problem of unrecognised entities have fallen foul of the positivism of international law, the illusions of sovereignty, and, as Wright suggests, the 'deliberate fiction[s] constructed to support the theory of an international legal order.'²⁴ Therefore, to echo Hans Morgenthau, the unrecognised entity endures a uniquely paradoxical existence in the realm of international thought due to the 'tension[s] [which exist] between international theory and international reality.'²⁵ This 'state of nature' actively inhibits a movement away from the traditional assumptions of

²³ Martin Wright, 'Why is There No International Theory?' (1966), in James Der Derian (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, pp. 19-20. Emphasis added.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁵ See Hans Morgenthau, 'The Intellectual and Political Functions of Theory' (1970), in James Der Derian (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 38.

realist theorists as the unrecognised entity - a concept imbued with values and notions of illegitimacy - threatens 'national existence' and, if ever accepted as an efficient unit of international order, also threatens 'national extinction.'²⁶ The enduring recalcitrance and reluctance of international theory to accommodate unrecognised entities suggests that as long as these ambiguous territorial units remain a theoretical threat to the doctrines of realism and state-centrism, the formation of progressive theoretical and analytical approaches toward unrecognised entities will continue to be an uphill struggle in spite of the advances being made by critical theorists. The breakthrough lies in the decoupling of *de facto* states and unrecognised entities from discourses which assert the existence of a hegemonic international legal order.

The state of disarray characteristic of international theory over the past three decades has been addressed by a growing number of theorists and researchers who are looking for new ways to engage with an international environment that has been poorly served by the state-centric theories of the past hundred years of international relations philosophy. The conceptual status of the unrecognised entity is a mirror in which we see the divisions and dichotomies that have preoccupied these theorists throughout the twentieth century being played out. The struggle to adequately define unrecognised entities is merely an extension of the wider problem faced by theorists and philosophers alike when it comes to adapting theories and schools of thought that have emerged in international relations theory over the past hundred years. Movements in critical international relations theory have attempted to redefine the global political nexus in such a way that takes account of the rapid changes occurring in the post-Cold War environment. However, the majority of scholars who have taken up the challenge of defining the role of unrecognised entities in the international system have struggled to revoke traditional international relations assumptions in their definitions. They have not provided future researchers with analytical frameworks which will inform conceptual, comparative, qualitative, or empirical analysis which tackles the unrecognised entity in terms of territorial revision on a local, global, and theoretical plain. The theoretical departures of writers such as Rosenau, Holsti, Mansbach, Vasquez, and Kleinshmidt (who have drawn inspiration from the critical investigations of theorists such as Wright,

²⁶ Ibid., p. 39.

Morgenthau, Hedley Bull, Keohane, Hoffmann, and Nye) have not been passed on to our analysis of unrecognised entities even though the questions they raise are of great importance to our understanding of wider issues confronting the discipline.

The theoretical treatment of the unrecognised state in international society is a reflection of the dichotomy that exists between theory and object on many levels. In very few writings on unrecognised entities do we get a tangible suggestion of the space inhabited by their functional processes in international theory. Most analysis remains doggedly empirical and focused on illegitimacy, violence, conflict, and shadow economics. Despite apparent breakthroughs in post-modern and post-structuralist interpretation, we continually witness the subservience of statelessness to hierarchical norms and notions of sovereign order. The state is still deeply entrenched in the global consciousness despite the slew of challenges fielded by worldwide political events which suggest that the state is not always in charge of its own affairs. Theoretical change has failed to necessitate a paradigm shift within the study and delineation of international order to the extent that future scholarship on unrecognised entities will most likely rely on familiar anachronistic formulations of statehood vs. statelessness despite revision of earlier constructs. To quote Rosenau, 'everywhere, it seems, established patterns have either come to an end or [have] been greatly modified,'²⁷ and it is these realisations which now compel us to break free from the manacles of traditional international relations theory in the study of unrecognised entities.

In the words of Edward Morse, 'We are now in an era without a paradigm to provide a framework for questions we ask...or [for] answers we expect to find sufficient as explanations.'²⁸ New research into unrecognised entities which situates the phenomenon in a post-consensus, post-hegemonic context will provide fertile ground for testing the potential and limitations of new international relations theory. The need for such research is well advocated by Holsti:

There is no longer a consensus on the subjects of inquiry and theorizing... Newer theoretical variations propose different problematics, and entirely different conceptualizations of the world. The thrust of the new work has centred on "grand

²⁷James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Global Interdependence* (London: Pinter, 1980), p. 13

²⁸Edward Morse, *Modernization and the Transformation of International Relations* (New York: The Free Press, 1976), xvi-xvii.

theory” and the ultimate philosophical problems of a discipline: How should we look at the universe we wish to describe and explain? Are our models of international politics reasonably consistent with realities? Who are the significant actors and units of analysis in international politics? Should we continue to ignore economic processes and actors? Do fundamental economic structures, on a global scale, determine the main outlines of states’ external policies? What are the critical normative problems in the field? Indeed, some have asked whether it is possible to generate knowledge of present realities if the assumptions we have held as self-evident for more than three hundred years no longer hold.²⁹

Holsti’s call for international theorists to rethink the ‘long-range value of competing paradigms’³⁰ is a timely call for the creation of new international relations discourses. In line with Holsti’s argument, the unrecognised entity delivers a theoretical challenge to normative rationales emerging from the past three hundred years of international relations theory. State-centrism has become an unsound theoretical backdrop for the scientific analysis of unrecognised entities and today’s variations of intrastate and trans-national conflict. Far from ‘playing yesterday’s game today’³¹, unrecognised entities operate in a highly contemporary environment in contexts of uncertainty, risk and political complexity which require pragmatic strategies in order to facilitate their continued existence. Unrecognised entities are as much stakeholders in contemporary games of geopolitics and international relations as their sovereign counterparts.

Ethno-Political Dynamics and Concepts

The unrecognised entity is representative of territorial revision and change in dynamics of global political development as we understand them. Macro dynamics such as the weakening of territoriality, states, and sovereignty are juxtaposed with micro-level resistance and affirmative action by actors who possess what Rosenau terms the ‘exclusionary’ ability to withdraw to *liberated* zones ‘outside the system’.³² The unrecognised entity is therefore not subject to, or bound by, normative assumptions which fail to move beyond state-centrism or into the uncharted territory of changing

²⁹ K J Holsti, *The Dividing Discipline* (London: Unwin Hyman Inc., 1985), p. 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, ix.

³¹ Pegg, *International Society and the De Facto State*, p. 128

³² For a fuller analysis of micro-macro dynamics and the impact of ‘Global’ and ‘Local’ worlds, see James N. Rosenau, *Distant Proximities: Dynamics Beyond Globalization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 79-152.

collectivities, identities, and political landscapes in the twenty-first century. As Rosenau suggests:

[...] in the present era, with its many uncertainties and its emphasis on individual and group identity, the salience of ethnicity looms large – for the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the Basques of Spain, the Kurds of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, the [Chechens] of Russia, the Hawaiians of Hawaii, the Serbs, Croats, or Muslims of Bosnia, and the Albanians of Kosovo, to note only a few of the groups that find wisdom in the aphorism that “it is never too late to revive your origins” and have thus aspired to create or maintain, even to fight for, their own ethnic homes.³³

The unrecognised entity is a comparatively recent addition to post-conflict forms of ethno-political organisation. New methodologies for understanding how these territories are created, secured, and negotiated in an era of global change and transformation are notable by their absence. This issue has taken a long time to come to the fore and as new theoretical constructs to take us beyond state-centrism and into the realm of new conceptual enquiry, we are able to identify restrictive discourses and aesthetic designations which continue to relegate unrecognised entities to the sink estate of international politics – a situation which is far from illuminating given the ability of these entities to survive in the international system, over the long term, against significant odds.

To move theory and concept forward toward a more holistic accommodation of unrecognised entities, the current normative formulas which define *de facto* states should be replaced by elastic frameworks which allow for greater emphasis on ethno-political dynamics which reflect the zeitgeist of ethno-national entrepreneurship active within a globalised international system. Dynamics like asymmetric conflict, neo-nationalism, identity politics, and the increasingly complex dialectical relationship between state-centrism and the multiplicity of ‘ethnoscapes’ and ‘ideoscapes’³⁴ from which new challenges to the sanctity of sovereignty and state governance emerge. Since the early 1990s, academics have played with the notion that nation-states are ‘imagined communities’ rooted deeply in the beliefs and value systems of citizens.³⁵ The unrecognised entity can also be included in analysis concerning discourses which focus on the origins of nationalism regardless of the fact that *de jure* recognition has not been

³³ Rosenau, *The Study of Global Interdependence*, p. 106

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 301

³⁵ Cf. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

attained by them. Despite the vicissitudes of incumbent regimes that often speak for few of the resident population, the 'ethnoscapes' and 'ideoscapes' which define unrecognised entities (and symbolise their cartographic presence) are the same places where identity and community are imagined the world over. This would imply that in unrecognised entities there exist dynamics which are a great deal more universal and nuanced than the intrigues of illegitimacy and status which often characterise their existence.

The variants of ethno-nationalism found in unrecognised entities bring multiple dynamics to localised boundaries, and these dynamics in turn create a situation where claims to authority encourage all sides to fight dirty. This also results in so-called 'frozen conflicts'³⁶, conflicts and disputes which are far from settled but lie in cold-storage, awaiting the failure of ethnic co-existence and the failure of realpolitik associated with democratisation and peace brokerage. Why? The answer may lie in the very methodologies used to facilitate those arrangements short of independence that have been the fate of most, if not all, unrecognised entities. These arrangements, as Rosenau suggests, 'allow people to envision themselves as citizens with multiple allegiances to new structures [which] may be short lived, as when issues move off the global agenda and the SOA's [Spheres of Authority] they encompass cease to exist...effective authority is [then] embedded in their activities as long as the reasons for their existence endure.'³⁷

The problem identified by Rosenau has a threefold impact on our discussion of unrecognised entities. Firstly, unrecognised states are often the subject of negotiations and peace settlements that appear feckless and superficial to interest groups and actors within the boundaries of the territory in question. These groups exercise localised autonomy and control of territory as a result of receding intrastate or post-intrastate conflict. Secondly, the unrecognised entity is a conceptual unit that rarely, if ever, takes centre-stage on the global agenda, to the extent that many of these unrecognised and illegitimate entities stagnate on the periphery of global affairs and are often subjugated by the realpolitik of sovereign powers. Thirdly, unrecognised entities have no formal legal

³⁶ The phrase 'frozen conflicts' is commonly used to describe conflicts in the former Soviet Union and is often applied in the context of territorial disputes and the outbreak of secessionist conflict in the Caucasus. The term 'frozen' relates directly to the fact that efforts to move such conflicts toward resolution have been slow and lacking political conviction from the parties concerned, with numerous economic and geo-strategic factors influencing the outcome of such talks. Thus, many of these conflicts have smouldered beyond the gaze of the international community in a form of stasis and remain poorly understood.

³⁷ Rosenau, *Op. Cit.*, p. 304

protection at the international level and illegal activity coupled with adventurism and corruption inhibits the formation of civic governance and democracy, which then stymies the development of those vital qualifications upon which the basis for legal recognition is predicated. This dilemma is, in a nutshell, the enduring tragedy of many unrecognised entities.

Conclusion

Very few international theorists continue to assert that there are states and nothing else in the international system. Critical approaches continue to develop which can be used to challenge the binary logic of state-centrism. Realism's assertion that global politics is little more than a contest between legitimate sovereign nation-states is arguably passé in the face of new challenges. The international relations of unrecognised entities continues to represent a significantly under-researched problem. Scott Pegg's fatalistic assertion that 'the *de facto* state is illegitimate no matter how effective it is'³⁸ leaves a difficult legacy for future research into what is a complex and ever-changing phenomenon. The unrecognised entity has the potential to be an important concept in the future remapping of hegemony and diversity in international law, as well as providing new and as yet unanticipated challenges to the security agendas of world powers given the nexus of actors, economies and capabilities based in these ambiguous territorially independent enclaves. In an age of competing ideologies, nationalisms and visions of progress at the micro-level, the world could witness a growth in the number of regions and localised 'spheres of authority' which display a tendency towards the forms of decentralisation and *de facto* independence which are the hallmark of unrecognised entities.

The phenomenon of globalisation has clearly transcended its conceptual limits and this had led theorists to ask whether the state is a decaying paradigm, representative of inflexible classical theories dating back more than three hundred years. The result is that many are now asking whether we should continue to cast the state as the 'terminal' entity to which our loyalties are directed.³⁹ Clearly a great deal of room exists for future research to rehabilitate the study of unrecognised entities and to propose radical alternatives to the opinions of scholars who rooted the study of unrecognised entities in

³⁸ Pegg, *De Facto States in the International System*, p. 1

³⁹ Rosenau, *Op. Cit.*, p. 342

state-centric theoretical frameworks and definitions. Arising from this is the question of whether, or not the unrecognised entity is part of the continuum of statecraft in the international system or, instead, represents an altogether new paradigm of territorial and political autonomy – a paradigm which deserves its own context as a historical feature of the interstate system.

One way to approach such a question is to acknowledge that unrecognised entities exhibit few of the structural attributes which validate and underpin the sovereign nation-state. For this reason it is necessary to question the assumption that these entities are states ‘in all but name’. A post-Cold war obsession with state preservation and democratisation has permeated international relations discourses to the extent that unrecognised entities received a narrative treatment which heightened the sense of dualism which represents states as order, continuity, stability and progress whilst unrecognised entities and *de facto* states are associated with disorder, violence and the stigma of secession and separatism. There is increasingly an explicit rejection of this dualism and a more balanced conceptual characterisation of unrecognised entities is needed to address the gulf which exists between state-centric assumption and observable political phenomena in this case. After all, the unrecognised state is a phenomenon entirely formed out of actual events, with real-time implications far more serious than the imposition of normative conceptual parameters.

The following chapters address a threefold problem within analysis of unrecognised entities. Firstly the problem of over-stating the unrecognised entity’s equivalence with the sovereign state and the application of a state-centric tableau to the predicament of these entities obscures the fact that dynamics other than the state creation impulse facilitate and sustain these regions over the long-term. Secondly, the primacy of secession as a causal dynamic, as appointed within the literature, raises a number of problems concerning intent, ideology and what can be practically achieved within a given scenario. Secession’s limitations as a causal explanation will be examined in detail in later chapters. Thirdly, the presence of Iraqi Kurdistan (as a case which has been routinely omitted from earlier analysis) challenges the parameters of earlier definitions applied to unrecognised entities. New examples such as this should be accounted for in the literature and it is in this context that the following chapter provides an overview of

Iraqi Kurdistan's contextual applicability as a case study and an example of *de facto* independence which destabilises many of the norms which reside within mainstream thinking on unrecognised entities.

3. Iraqi Kurdistan: Perspectives on Status and Political Change Since 1991

Following on from the previous chapter's discussion of theoretical approaches to unrecognised entities, this section focuses on the selection of Iraqi Kurdistan as a case study and brings together perspectives on historical, political and spatial parameters which enhance our understanding of the region as a significant example of *de facto* independence in operation. Instead of presenting a historiography of the political development of Iraqi Kurdistan, this section summarises many of the key dilemmas associated with the region's emergence as an autonomous enclave in 1991. The section's principle aim is to establish the relevance of Iraqi Kurdistan's example to wider discussions of unrecognised entities in the international system. From the start, this discussion acknowledges that the region is a *de facto* independent enclave within Iraq and is one which can be directly situated within earlier frameworks developed for understanding unrecognised entities. However, this section highlights complexities in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan which challenge many of the assumptions contained in literature on so-called 'unrecognised states'. Its aim is to highlight this case-specific deviation and identify how the example of Iraqi Kurdistan expands an earlier understanding of unrecognised entities in the international system.

Perspectives on Status

Iraqi Kurdistan has been likened to a state and it is not difficult to find state-centric narratives and opinion pieces on the political development of the region. To take seriously the notion that Iraqi Kurdistan is a nascent state, as yet incomplete, is to suppress those issues which contradict and falsify such depictions. Therefore, it is important to recognise the limitations of state-centric discourses on Iraqi Kurdistan and explore why the political development the region (and power dynamics within it) reveal a far from normalised ethno-political situation. Interest in unrecognised entities as a research area in international politics and area studies disciplines over the past two decades, suggests a desire for an academic debate concerning the emergence of *de facto*

independent enclaves like Iraqi Kurdistan. However, there is very little contextual placement of Iraqi Kurdistan within analysis on the subject.

Iraqi Kurdistan is a problematic addition to analysis of unrecognised 'states' because it does not possess the defining attributes of the *de facto* state posited by Pegg in 1998, it does not conform to Kolstø's quasi-state model of 2006, yet it is perhaps the unrecognised entity *par excellence* despite its lack of a formal declaration of independence or overt establishment through a secessionist conflict. Iraqi Kurdistan's ambiguous presence within seminal literature on the subject of unrecognised 'states' is exactly what makes the region such an interesting case study of *de facto* independence which remains unrecognised at the international level. Iraqi Kurdistan is distanced from the working definitions currently used to select cases of *de facto*/unrecognised states primarily due to an historic lack of an explicit secessionist conflict in this case. The evolution of Kurdish *de facto* independence in northern Iraq followed a trajectory which, at present, is not easily accommodated within theoretical frameworks proposed for other unrecognised entities – frameworks which emphasise secessionist agendas and unitary governance alongside non-recognition in international law (despite the region's possession of the latter two attributes). Iraqi Kurdistan is, therefore, the example which represents a missing theoretical and empirical expansion required to flux and bend the concept of the unrecognised entity in such a way that it is not required to reflect equivalence with statehood through secession, but rather a more nuanced representation of *de facto* independence as a stand-alone outcome of historic ethno-political conflicts, fissures and disputes which do not automatically signify or denote agendas of secession. As is discussed at length later in this thesis, secession has a specificity which is very often transcended by examples of political development in unrecognised entities. Iraqi Kurdistan is a prime example of this as it presents a strong challenge to theoretical frameworks, models and narratives which depict secession as a straightforward periphery-versus-centre paradigm.

The task of typifying the status of regions like Iraqi Kurdistan and their relationships within the interstate system is very difficult. The variability which exists between cases resists attempts of this sort. Yet, at the same time, it is acknowledged that these unrecognised state-like entities are visible phenomena in the global nexus of states

by virtue of the fact that they have been an object of study within political science and international relations for well over a decade. However, whilst serious attempts have been made at understanding these entities through analysis of international law and historic conventions concerning statehood, sovereignty, autonomy, secession and partition, the ambiguity of these entities, and their long-term ability to survive in what appear to be asymmetric and often disadvantageous geopolitical situations, are indicative of highly contemporary strategies which are not adequately typified through traditional frameworks used to understand sovereign entities.

Iraqi Kurdistan's *de facto* independence within the sovereign space of Iraq is a potent example of the theoretical parallax which often accompanies discussions of unrecognised entities. On the one hand there appears to be a level of political development which appears contiguous and may imply the presence or evolution of institutionalised state apparatus, but on the other hand, an analysis of structures of power at the local level within Iraqi Kurdistan reveal a picture of fragmentation which directly contradicts the minimalist notion that the modes of governance observed signify the presence of a *de facto* state. Attempts to answer the question of status, therefore, are significantly influenced by the analytical viewpoint of the observer and are subject to distortions of perspective which accompany specific disciplinary and methodological discourses. Analysis of Iraqi Kurdistan's status often confronts issues of this sort because divergent opinions on questions of status and the nature of power surface regularly as a result of the fault lines running through regional politics at both the formal/political and discursive levels. In discussions of status, particularly where ethno-political conflict has militated against normalised relations with sovereign states, it is nearly impossible to typify the political relationships which contextualise an unrecognised entity without instrumentalising some dynamics at the expense of others. Thus the question of status is a perennial problem in literature on unrecognised entities and one which feeds directly into the theoretical problems associated in forming typologies, models, and frameworks to tackle these scenarios.

In Carver's study *Is Iraq/Kurdistan a State such that it can be Said to Operate State Systems and Thereby Offer Protection to its 'Citizens'?* (2002) the question of status was examined in the context of whether applicants for refugee status from Iraq

could be returned to Iraqi Kurdistan.¹ The benefit of examining the region's status from this perspective is that it enabled Carver to ask '...who are the state authorities within Iraq/Kurdistan? From which authorities can a person ordinarily residing in Iraq/Kurdistan seek protection? And can any of the forces present provide adequate protection?'² In her analysis of the concept of the state Carver cites the works of Machiavelli, Rousseau and Hobbes as representing western philosophical thinking which based arguments around the issue of (state) protection.³ These classical positions, which emphasised the emergence of states through the ability of rulers to *protect* their subjects and citizens, are juxtaposed with what Carver calls 'post-World War definitions'⁴ which 'brought the argument into an international if not global arena, arguing that a *state* cannot be defined merely by its own experience, but 'must be seen in the context of its interaction with the rest of the world''⁵.

The recognition of a post-war shift in thinking on states is important in this discussion as the existence of such a shift partly explains why the discourse of an 'international society' and an international 'club' of states recurs in earlier excursus focused on the absence of *de jure* recognition in unrecognised entities. Carver highlights the *1933 Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States* as a representation of the newly internationalised thinking on states.⁶ It is interesting to note that Scott Pegg's 1998 definition of the *de facto* state (discussed in the previous chapter) draws heavily on the criteria of defined population, territory and government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states reified within the 1933 Montevideo Convention. It can be argued, therefore, that seminal works on unrecognised entities emerged from highly internationalised post-World War thinking on the state system which did not allow the unrecognised entity to be defined in terms of its 'own experience' but rather the structural logic of the international system. This brings us closer to understanding why case variability increasingly became excluded from the theoretical criteria used to define

¹ Natasha Carver, 'Is Iraq/Kurdistan a State such that it can be Said to Operate State Systems and Thereby Offer Protection to its 'Citizens'?', *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 14:1, 2002, pp. 57-84.

² *Ibid.*, p. 58-59

³ *Ibid.*, p. 59

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

unrecognised entities in international politics, and why cases such as Iraqi Kurdistan continue to be excluded from the literature.

Carver's examination of Iraqi Kurdistan's status through the prism of refugee law undermines the applicability of notions of statehood and therefore also the bigger abstractions concerning the term *de facto* state. She argues:

[...] Iraq/Kurdistan is not a *state* nor has it been recognised as such by any national or international governing body. It is not led, and has not been since the Gulf War, by one ruler or government (Machiavelli); it does not exist by the general will of its own people (Rousseau); there is no social contract or central governing body (Locke); and it does not have official status as a *state* in an international context (Kelsen). Nor does it attain to the Greek or Roman definitions – the population do not share a common language, culture and history, but come from different 'tribes' which are now to a large extent reflected in the different political groupings; nor do they come under one jurisdiction... Reflecting on all these definitions, it can only be concluded that the *state* as such is *Al Jumhuriyah al Iraqiyah* – the Republic of Iraq, the 'body politic organised for supreme civil rule and government'.⁷

Carver qualifies the above arguments concerning Iraqi Kurdistan's status with the following statements on Iraq's *de jure* contiguity in international law:

The Provisional Constitution of Iraq of 1990 declares that Iraq is an 'indivisible entity of which no part can be ceded'. This is supported definitively by Resolution 688 (1991) which 'reaffirm[ed] the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Iraq and of all States in the area'. This has also been reaffirmed separately by the US-British partnership, the Arab League, the Iraqi National Congress, and even the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic party) themselves, who have continually (officially) professed a commitment to the territorial integrity of Iraq.⁸

These observations and their related arguments call serious attention to the tenuous relevance of describing unrecognised regions like Iraqi Kurdistan as *states*. Like many writers on refugee politics, Carver aligns the state with specific notions of civil rule and governance which, by definition, have no recognised legal foundation in unrecognised entities. Whilst Carver's analysis was written before the US led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the changes this brought for Kurds in the autonomous provinces of the north, many of the factors which militate against Iraqi Kurdistan representing a *state* persist despite the formalisation of unity governance in the autonomous provinces, increased

⁷ Ibid., p. 60

⁸ Ibid., pp. 60-61.

securitisation, and increased governmental and ceremonial roles in the Iraqi state. Of these factors, divisions between the ruling factions in Iraqi Kurdish politics, hostility toward an independent Kurdistan by neighbouring states, and a lack of external support for independence have constrained the vital formation of a secessionist / independence agenda necessary for the region to be understood as a *de facto* state.

The March 2004 Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) which provided for the interim constitutional governance of Iraq, recognised the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) as the official government (for the interim period) of the ‘three ethnically Kurdish northern provinces’⁹. Under the TAL, Kurdish was recognised as one of Iraq’s two official languages, the Kurdish *Peshmerga* were permitted to act as internal security and police within the KRG administered region, and a range of features were written into its framework which recognised Kurdish autonomy and self-governance¹⁰. These and other constitutional deliberations within recent Iraqi politics indicate a willingness by Kurdish politicians, on the one hand, to participate in the creation of a federated existence for Iraqi Kurdistan within the sovereign space of greater Iraq, whilst at the same time conducting Iraqi Kurdistan’s internal affairs with a low degree of accountability to the authority of Baghdad¹¹.

The significance of events surrounding the TAL in this discussion, lie in what they reveal about the status of Iraqi Kurdistan as a political space within Iraqi politics. Iraqi Kurdistan, around the period of deliberations over the TAL, becomes symbolic of both an autonomous, self-administered zone within Iraq, and also an internal Iraqi affair given the leverage such autonomy gave to Kurdish politicians as they negotiated their position in post-Saddam Iraq¹². In late 2004, KDP leader Massoud Barzani is on record as warning that ‘the Kurds would not feel obliged to protect Iraq’s unity if their demand for federation is refused’¹³. Although symbolic of political brinkmanship during this stage of Iraq’s post-war political development, it is worth noting the deployment of the threat of secession as a bargaining tool at this time. Clearly there existed significant

⁹ Bill Park, ‘The Kurds and post-Saddam political arrangements in Iraq’, *Adelphi Series*, 45:374, 2005, p. 29

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-31.

¹¹ Tozun Bahcheli & Peter Fragiskatos, ‘Iraqi Kurdistan: Fending off uneasy neighbours’, *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*, 2:1, 2008, p. 68.

¹² Park, *Op. Cit.*, p. 35.

¹³ *Ibid.*

incentives for Kurdish political groups to push for optimised power within a federated Iraq given the meagre benefits a militant stance on secession or independence would bring. Stansfield provides additional insight into negotiations during this period:

Believing that a federal system of government would protect at least the autonomous region they currently administered, the Kurds continued to place federalism before all else in their negotiations with other Iraqi groups. Even though the Sunni Arab negotiators never liked the idea of the Kurds being autonomous from the rest of Iraq, believing perhaps with good cause that such an arrangement would be but the first step leading to the accretion of Kirkuk into the federal region followed by the secession of Kurdistan from the state, they grudgingly accepted that no authority inside Iraq could *forcibly integrate the Kurds back into a unitary state*.¹⁴

Political deliberations of this sort often serve to reverse both the cause and effect of essentialist arguments used to define unrecognised “states”. In the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, autonomy and *de facto* independence have arguably served to distance Kurdish political demands from the circular causality of independence and separatism which are so regularly associated with ethno-nationalist situations of this type.

The status of the Iraqi Kurdistan region, therefore, remains simultaneously imagined as part of the fabric of the Iraqi state *and* a southern component of a greater Kurdistan, as well as constituting an unrecognised, *de facto* independent entity which, at the rhetorical level, also provides a platform for explicit articulations of the desire for an independent Kurdish state. This multi-spatial dynamic is a feature shared with other unrecognised entities where autonomous enclaves emerge in the midst of multipartite political and territorial disputes. To this end, Iraqi Kurdistan can be conveniently situated within the realms of thinking on unrecognised ‘states’ (*de facto* states, quasi-, semi-states etc.), but its political evolution challenges many of the major assumptions and generalisations which dominate the literature. Therefore, to accommodate Iraqi Kurdistan as an unrecognised entity requires the modification of our understanding of dynamics of secession and *de facto* independence deployed in early literature. Iraqi Kurdistan is an example of a *de facto* independent entity that derives considerable power and status from functioning as a component part of its sovereign ‘parent’ state. This subverts literature on secessionist republics and unrecognised states by raising the

¹⁴ Gareth Stansfield, *Iraq* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), pp. 184-185. (Emphasis Added)

possibility that integrative outcomes may be expedient, in juxtaposition to separation and the attainment of statehood; which may be just as desirable in the medium to long-term as the pursuit of independence. Admittedly we cannot ignore the ideological significance of independence to Kurdish nationalist movements, but the practicalities associated with creating an independent Kurdish state inside the cartographic parameters of the Iraqi state may not be expedient given ever-present externalities and variables of non-recognition, isolation and military weakness which contain the potential to undermine the permanence of Kurdish political gains since 2003.

Perspectives on Internal Politics

1991 not only saw the governmental apparatus of Saddam's Ba'athist regime withdrawn from areas which subsequently came under the administrative auspices of the KRG; it also saw the majority of the population in these areas fall under the control of two parties - the KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)¹⁵. Whilst a great amount of attention has been given to conflict and internecine disputes between these parties and their private militia groups, less consideration has been given to theoretical questions of how political dynamics between these groups have determined the status of Iraqi Kurdistan. This study considers the internal divisions, relations, and compromises between political groupings within unrecognised entities to be the ultimate determinants of the outcomes which facilitate long-term *de facto* independence. Relations between parties like the KDP and the PUK, whilst vital to our understanding of Iraqi Kurdish politics, have a tendency to become shorthand for ethno-political enmities, disputes over power sharing and the distribution of resources. This symbolises the rather tired question of context and how best to historicise the emergence of an independent entity in Iraqi Kurdistan. Perhaps a bolder statement to make is that what we are dealing with when we think of a contemporary Iraqi Kurdistan is a distinct lack of a unitary movement, a lack of consensus between Kurds on the future status of their autonomous zone, and dilemmas associated with autonomous existence inside the sovereign parameters of Iraq - dilemmas reflected in the mixed fortunes of the Kurdish political parties themselves.

¹⁵ Carver, Op. Cit., pp. 67-68

An important point of departure for analysing the impact of internal political dynamics in Iraqi Kurdistan is established by Carver, who points out that whilst political control of Iraqi Kurdistan has been apportioned between the KDP, PUK and, ceremonially, the KRG, there has been no formal diplomatic recognition of these Kurdish political organisations at the diplomatic level. The question of contiguity is further complicated by the division of Iraqi Kurdistan into two or more ‘statelets’¹⁶ which are representative of the distribution of power between the Kurdish political parties, and the presence of internal borders between their respective spheres of influence. The presence, therefore, of several armed political factions, each possessing private militias / security apparatus nominally composed of *Peshmerga* forces, remains divisive by dint of a non-adherence to romantic notions of unity often expected from ethnically homogeneous, autonomous enclaves like Iraqi Kurdistan. To illustrate this point, Carver presents us with a snapshot of Iraqi Kurdistan’s internal instabilities in 2002:

Whilst the PUK and KDP both run “state-like” entities... the internal ‘borders’ between the territories are not clear-cut frontiers as many reports suggest, but rather lines-of-control established after the [civil] war of 1996. Secondly, the region is far from ‘stable’. The *peshmergas* of both sides have had to deal with the Iraqi government on a regular basis. The PUK has had the added problem of IMK and the *Jund-al-Islam*, whilst the KDP have to deal with the Turkish incursions into their land to fight the PKK. What is more, there is and has been violent disagreement between the individuals and political/tribal groups concerned.¹⁷

Eight years after Carver’s assessment of political instabilities in Iraqi Kurdistan, the region has achieved far greater levels of political and economic stability through increased securitisation and attention to the development of civil and economic infrastructure. Considerable progress has been made in the rehabilitation of basic infrastructural facilities since *de facto* independence in 1991 and it has been argued that the region is now well past the reconstruction stage¹⁸. Michiel Leezenberg comments that many of the problems which have affected post-war Iraq since 2003 were ‘nothing new’ to those who have followed developments in Iraqi Kurdistan since 1991¹⁹, and he

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 67

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 68. Islamic Movement in Kurdistan (IMK); Kurdistan Workers Party / *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (PKK).

¹⁸ Michiel Leezenberg, ‘Iraqi Kurdistan: contours of a post-civil war society’, *Third World Quarterly*, 26:4-5, 2005, p. 632.

¹⁹ Ibid.

writes that since overcoming problems of underdevelopment and conflict Iraqi Kurdistan has 'emerged as by far the most stable, secure and prosperous region' of Iraq. It is implied within Leezenberg's analysis that following 'relatively successful' local elections in 1992, which saw Massoud Barzani's KDP and Jalal Talabani's PUK emerge victorious, destructive infighting led to the creation of two 'one-party statelets' which experienced flourishing economies under the UN oil-for-food program from 1997 onwards.²⁰

An important feature of 1990s Iraqi Kurdistan is how the spheres of influence attributed to the main Kurdish political parties emerged inside a *de facto* independent entity which was highly anomalous in terms of its legal status. Whilst juridically still a component territory of Iraq, the creation of a safe haven in the north and the absence of Baghdad's state apparatus created the template for an unrecognised entity to emerge in northern Iraq without Kurdish secessionist or separatist conflict as a precursor phase. The power vacuum created by the 'centrally propelled secession'²¹ of Saddam Hussein's government, an extremely rare political occurrence discussed at length later in this study, facilitated the rise of strong, autonomous Kurdish political factions who could then construct state-like institutional arrangements under foreign military protection. Leezenberg summarises the events which led up to the withdrawal of Iraqi forces in the following passage:

The 1991 establishment of a Safe Haven along the Turkey- Iraq border contributed to the creation of a juridically anomalous *de facto* independent entity: it was no longer part of Iraq, yet not recognised as distinct; the UN Security Council Resolution 688 that sanctioned it was interpreted as setting a precedent for humanitarian intervention, yet in fact it protected Turkish state interests against Kurdish refugees. By the summer of 1991 most refugees had returned to their homes, many of which had been looted by government forces. An uneasy balance of power was reached between Iraqi government forces and Kurdish insurgent troops and after several bloody clashes, the Iraqi regime withdrew its military and other personnel from most of the Autonomous Region in October 1991. At the same time, it imposed an economic blockade, gradually reducing oil supplies and centrally distributed foodstuffs.²²

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Taken from Daniele Conversi, 'Central Secession: towards a new analytical concept? The case of former Yugoslavia', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26:2, 2000, pp. 333-355.

²² Leezenberg, Op. Cit., p. 636.

The questions posed by these events in the 1990s are many. Does secessionist intent matter for the creation of unrecognised entities? Is it necessary to use the concept of secession to typify the relationship between international society, sovereign states and unrecognised entities like Iraqi Kurdistan?

Clearly the answers to these questions largely depend on questions of perspective and context. In the case of Iraqi Kurdistan it is arguable that the Iraqi state apparatus, by withdrawing from part of its own territory, created the space for ethno-nationalist political parties, and other actors, to pursue an autonomous existence and impress an independent political agenda upon Iraqi politics. This highly unusual political evolution goes a long way to explaining why Kurdish politicians have opted for federal outcomes for the Kurdistan region in deliberations over constitutional governance in Iraq. It may be the case that autonomy and *de facto* independence *within* a federal framework yields far more political and economic advantages, options and leverage to national minorities provided they are not militarily and economically weak. By securitising their autonomy within a federal framework, the Kurds have created a political and economic *entrepôt* within northern Iraq that does not suffer from the negative effects of isolation experienced by many break-away republics and secessionist entities.

Historical hostilities between Iraqi Kurdistan and neighbouring Turkey and Iran also militate against pursuing the option of independent statehood despite this explicit desire by some Kurdish groups and politicians. By remaining a legally approbated constitutional component of Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan remains an internal Iraqi affair. Since the war of 2003, this counterintuitive integration into the sovereign space of Iraq provides a political buffer against external actors altering the physical parameters of Kurdish *de facto* independence in the north. Despite regular military actions by Iran and Turkey against militant factions in the mountainous border areas²³, the region has experienced no significant attempt by an external authority to alter the geopolitics of Kurdish self-rule in northern Iraq. With the absence of internal interference from the government of Iraq and external actors, Kurdish political parties have been able to bargain from a remarkably

²³ Whilst Turkey's historical campaign against the PKK is well documented, regular Iranian artillery strikes on areas of Iraqi Kurdistan in response to the presence of Kurdish rebels are also reported. See Michael Howard 'Kurds Flee Homes as Iran Shells Iraq's northern frontier', *The Guardian*, Friday 18 August 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/aug/18/iraq.iran>, (Accessed 03 March 2010).

strong position with the governments of sovereign states considering the lack of juridical and diplomatic recognition attributed to Iraqi Kurdistan. Whilst Iraqi Kurdistan's internal affairs may appear chaotic and Iran, Iraq, Turkey and the United States continue to have distinct and often competing agendas as regards the future of Iraq's Kurds²⁴, there appear to be few external dynamics in the political landscape which signify a deconstruction of Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq. On the contrary, it is arguable that the Achilles heel of Kurdish *de facto* independence lies elsewhere.

External hostilities remain a significant constraint upon Kurdish self-rule. Given their anxieties over the effect of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq upon their own domestic Kurdish populations, Iran, Turkey, and to a lesser extent Syria, hold the highest stake in the political emergence of an independent Iraqi Kurdistan and possess a strong capacity to influence the future evolution of independence in the region²⁵. Cooperation has been evident between Kurdish political parties and the governments of Turkey and Iran. The complex interplay between the political interests of the KDP/PUK and the governments which surround their autonomous enclave are symbolic of the politics of expediency which is often required to maintain *de facto* independence in theoretically asymmetric political environments. As examined by Bahceli & Fragiskatos, there are stakeholders in the politics of Iraqi Kurdistan far beyond the Kurdish political parties themselves:

Ironically, although their post-Saddam relations with Turkey (and to a lesser extent with Iran) have been problematic, the KDP and the PUK maintained cooperative relations with Turkey and Iran during more than a decade of self-rule (1991–2003) under the protection of the no-fly zone. Turkey and Iran availed themselves of opportunities to influence developments in northern Iraq and pressured the Kurdish leaders to facilitate their intervention. As often as not, they were invited to intervene on behalf of the leadership of the KDP or the PUK as Barzani and Talabani struggled to prevail over each other.²⁶

The presence, therefore, of external sovereign governments as stakeholders in the political development of unrecognised entities remains a feature which consistently recurs in analysis of these phenomena.

²⁴ Louise Fawcett, 'Down but not out? The Kurds in International Politics', *Review of International Studies*, 27, 2001, p. 117

²⁵ Bahceli & Fragiskatos, *Op. Cit.*, p. 69

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Whilst legal ambiguities concerning status in international law, and the flexibility afforded by *de facto* independence and autonomous governance all allow governments in unrecognised entities significant latitude in negotiating outcomes with sovereign actors, at the same time it gives surrounding states great power to obstruct movement towards independence. In the case of relations with Turkey, the political landscape has been mired with ethno-political complications, even if they are suspected of providing a political pretence for Ankara:

The Turkish government has warned the Kurdish leadership against incorporating Kirkuk, and has threatened to intervene on behalf of the Turkmen. It is widely acknowledged that Ankara's real concern is that gaining the vast oil resources of the Kirkuk region will enable Iraqi Kurds to establish a viable state... Turkish-Iraqi Kurd strains [have become] even greater, and Turkey's rhetoric even more strident, over the issue of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) fighters who have enjoyed safe haven in northern Iraq for many years... Ironically, while Turkish-Iraqi Kurd political relations have been strained, their economic relations have been advancing to their mutual satisfaction. A substantial portion of the Turkish-Iraqi trade involves Turkey's trade with the KRG, and several Turkish media outlets have highlighted the benefits for Turkey of the growing economic activity of Turkish firms in the [Kurdistan Region]. Turkey's trade with Iraq 'reached \$3 billion in 2006' and, Turkey's Trade Minister Kursat Tuzmen boasted that it could exceed \$5 billion in 2007.²⁷

It is widely acknowledged that trade with Turkey is an important economic lifeline for the Iraqi Kurdistan region. This is consistent with King's observations that disputes surrounding unrecognised entities can evolve into 'something close to equilibrium' with autonomy movements and their opponents both deriving benefits from 'untaxed trade and production flowing through the former war zones'²⁸. *De facto* independence brings with it many problems of economic and political survival, of which Iraqi Kurdistan is a profound example. King describes such situations as 'a dark version of Pareto efficiency' where 'the general welfare cannot be improved... without at the same time making key interest groups in both camps worse off.'²⁹ King does not explicitly relate this level of efficiency to the predicament of *de facto* independence. This dynamic exists across many cases and will be explored in the final chapter of this study.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 72-74.

²⁸ Charles King, 'The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognised States', *World Politics*, 53, July 2001, p. 525.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 525-6

Conclusion

The case of Iraqi Kurdistan provides a timely and useful laboratory for the testing of assumptions and generalisations associated with unrecognised 'states' literature. Caution should be exercised when using state-centric narratives in the context of Iraqi Kurdistan for not only is there at present no formally declared drive to create a separate state in northern Iraq, but the region possesses a level of integration into the sovereign space of Iraq which contradicts narratives of Kurdish statehood within their autonomous provinces. Equally, to speak of statehood in Iraqi Kurdistan, even *de facto* statehood, assumes a level of political and civil contiguity which is not evident in Iraqi Kurdistan at present. Whilst there are symbolic apparatus for the legislative and constitutional mechanisms of Kurdish self-rule in the form of the KRG, the coercive power of the two dominant Kurdish political parties, the KDP and the PUK, remains the *force majeure* at both the local and tribal level inside Iraqi Kurdistan.

This chapter puts forward a number of counterintuitive arguments which seek to destabilise the notion of secession as a periphery versus centre dynamic as it has been widely portrayed in the literature. Again, the case of Iraqi Kurdistan serves as a case study which illustrates extreme variability. Political conditions can emerge which allow autonomous enclaves to transform into unrecognised entities without overt secessionist or separatist politics being the dominant catalyst for state break-up. Even though cases such as Iraqi Kurdistan exist as examples which widen definitions and undermine existing theories, there has been insufficient examination of situations where the conduct of the state *itself* has militated against (a) political contiguity throughout the whole of its sovereign territorial space, and (b) the prevention of national minorities achieving autonomy, self-rule and the securitisation of territory outside the control of the central authorities and its coercive apparatus. The controversial concept of 'central secession' has been introduced in this chapter to differentiate between the actions of a central government which result in it relinquishing control of part of its sovereign territory to a national minority, and the ethno-nationalist secession which is the analytical backbone of periphery versus centre frameworks on state break-up. In later chapters this thesis discusses the actions of Saddam Hussein's government which represent a practical

secession from the provinces of northern Iraq which this thesis refers to as Iraqi Kurdistan.

Given that the central Iraqi authorities played such a key (and perhaps unwitting) role in facilitating the emergence of an autonomous Kurdish enclave, the nuances of political development in Iraqi Kurdistan are such that it is very difficult to examine the region's administration and political evolution in isolation from wider trends in Iraqi politics. This chapter has argued that far from adopting a position of secessionist militancy, the facts of deliberations concerning the constitutional status of Iraqi Kurdistan indicate a desire on the part of Kurdish politicians to remain an autonomous component of the Iraqi state rather than risk the potential disadvantages which would be associated with formalised independence seeking in this setting. These dynamics pose an additional challenge to our understanding of unrecognised entities as the model of the secessionist/separatist republic so often encountered in analysis of post-Soviet space, is of severely limited utility in this Middle Eastern context. Iraqi Kurdistan presents a challenge to our understanding through the methodologies its politicians have used to maintain *de facto* independence over the long-term, notably their political prominence in post-Saddam Iraq and their skilful use of an unrecognised entity within Iraq to increase political leverage for their parties in regional geopolitics. The creation of an independent state in Iraqi Kurdistan does not appear expedient at the time of writing and overt debate concerning such an agenda remains cautious within Iraqi politics given the politically incendiary effect the push for an independent Kurdish state would have. Accordingly, the next chapter turns its attention to the problematic notion of 'stateness' and its dominance in literature on unrecognised entities.

4. Challenging the Fiction of “Stateness” in Academic Discourse on Unrecognised Entities

In the previous chapter some key theoretical and conceptual issues were examined in terms of how the definitions and designations of stateless independence relevant in the cases of so-called *de facto* states are contentious and problematic. The term ‘*de facto* state’, as has been illustrated, is a problematic term which poorly conceptualises the incredibly nebulous predicaments exhibited by the territories (or territorial entities) in question. Whilst the term allows them to be framed and understood conveniently within the mainstream conceptual frameworks and definitions of international relations, it is clear that the political concept of an *unrecognised* entity can be examined in contexts which have seldom been acknowledged in the literature. There are challenges to how we articulate paradigms of territorial revision involving unrecognised entities which international relations and political science analysts have not yet considered. It is here that the difference between Iraqi Kurdistan and other unrecognised entities (or *de facto* states) become most apparent. The chapter which follows is an attempt to highlight, through the use of post-structuralist methods and approaches, the limitations of normative generalisations applied to unrecognised entities. This is done by engaging with the production of “stateness” which is alleged to occur within them. So far the limitations of international relations frameworks on unrecognised entities have resulted in a conceptual vacuum. Early works on unrecognised entities favour categorisation and the infusion of the concept with status related traits which represent an attempt at creating comparative uniformity. The following discussion is predicated upon notions of the absence of such uniformity in unrecognised entities; and it is argued that the terms and labels which largely govern mainstream analysis of these entities unnecessarily straightjacket what is otherwise a fluid and dynamic concept.

In Iraq, In Kurdistan: A Typology of Symbolic Order

Unrecognised entities (as portrayed in a great many narratives dealing with the subject from a post-Cold War / post-Soviet viewpoint) remain an aberration of the laws and logic which govern the international system. They are, put mildly, a monstrosity, a mutation

which challenges us and taps into our darkest fears of instability in the symbolic order of states and constitutional logic. In 1998 Scott Pegg declared (rather prematurely) that the *de facto* state remains in a condition of perpetual and terminal illegitimacy no matter how effective its attempts at legitimising itself are¹. Following events in Kosovo, South Ossetia and, to some extent, Iraqi Kurdistan, we can now falsify much of Pegg's assertion due to the problematic content of the model he presents. The dedicated comparative analysis of *de facto* states (analysis which is inextricably linked to thinkers such as Pegg) has left unexamined a core fluidity which resides in the concept of these state-like entities. This fluidity is what concerns us here. How is it that allegedly illegitimate entities in the international system – entities which have been excluded from all narratives on the praxis of statecraft – are able to generate convincing ideological narratives which then define their politics, and 'the political' around them, with seemingly legitimate and articulate claims? It becomes evident that something very important has bypassed our understanding of these aberrations in the symbolic order of the international system.

Part of the problem is that unrecognised entities occupy a space akin to a littoral zone in world politics; a space where the tides of local, regional, and global politics threatens to reveal or submerge the entities' presence in a constant cycle of reappraisal and neglect. International relations theorists have, for some time, fixed their gaze upon the unrecognised entities which occupy this zone in international political space mostly for purposes related to discussions of legitimacy and sovereignty. But legitimacy and sovereignty are never fixed in time and space, therefore, categorisations and typologies designed to facilitate comparative analyses of state like entities are often rigid and quickly become anachronistic. For example, the term '*de facto* state' is so loaded with a positivism of separatist and secessionist accomplishment that it becomes unwieldy outside of a Eurasian context. Iraqi Kurdistan for example, as a legally approbated part of a federal Iraq, does not exhibit the necessary secessionist attributes to justify the application of the title of *de facto* state, yet it remains an unrecognised entity. It is not uncommon to find narratives referring to Iraqi Kurdistan as a *de facto* state and, to a

¹ '...the *de facto* state is illegitimate no matter how effective it is.' See Scott Pegg, *International Society and the De Facto State* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998) p. 1

certain extent, there have been moments in recent Kurdish history when trends appeared to favour the emergence of a Kurdish secessionist (or at least separatist) territorial entity in the region. In fact, it would be a mistake to argue that a *de facto* state exists within Iraq's borders as it cannot be safely assumed that the historical resistance struggle between Kurdish political factions and the government of Iraq was ever a direct push for territorial independence or, by definition, a coherent expression of separatist or secessionist intent. Furthermore, not since the disappearance of the *Mahabad Republic* in 1946² has there been any significant (non-Kurdish) external support for an independent Kurdish state; and it would be derisory to assume that the current Kurdish leadership would pursue a secessionist agenda with no such external support. In this way Kurdistan is unique amongst unrecognised entities in *not* being classifiable as a *de facto* state.

Despite its current level of autonomy, Iraqi Kurdistan remains very much part of the fabric of the Iraqi state. It is not yet a fully separated Kurdish region, or a Kurdish *de facto* state by any means. This situation is a reflection of the political geography of Iraqi Kurdistan, its former status as a UN protectorate, the ongoing *entente cordiale* between the dominant political factions in Iraqi Kurdish politics³, and the reality that the region is also home to other ethno-political identities and groupings. Iraqi Kurdistan is a highly contested space internationally, within Iraq, and on an intra-societal level inside the region itself. This has, to a large extent, shaped the articulation of political space and 'the political' within the region. It has also shaped the ascendant political ideology of a viable and progressive Kurdistan, open for commercial activities and supported by paternalistic Western good-will. The reality of this ideological transformation is increased self-belief among the Kurdish political elite, emboldened by their status as powerbrokers and statesmen in regional politics, and by the physical manifestations of increased foreign direct investment and the commercial development of sectors of the regional infrastructure.

If we stop to consider the effects of the current transformation beyond the physical, it is clear that we are witnessing a watershed in Kurdish politics. The current

² David McDowall, *A Modern History of The Kurds* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 241-246.

³ Politics in Iraqi Kurdistan since 1991 has been dominated by two Kurdish political parties, the *Partîya Demokrata Kurdistan* (Kurdistan Democratic Party) – KDP, and the *Patriotic Union of Kurdistan* – PUK. Power-sharing between the two political parties forms an important functional component of the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) mandate in northern Iraq.

polycentric version of the governing administration in Iraqi Kurdistan, based as it is around power-sharing between the KDP/PUK axis and an ostensible open-door policy toward ethno-political groups within the region, conceals what Edkins terms a 'depoliticization' of *Kurdish* politics:

We are not talking about an absence of the political through some sort of lapse or mistake but an express operation of depoliticization or technologization: a reduction to calculability. In this context ideology is the move that conceals the depoliticization of politics and hides the possibility – the risks – of “the political”.⁴

Edkins' analysis of 'the political' in this context has as its point of departure, an appreciation how international politics has become contested and abstracted in such a way that political processes are no longer the empirical preoccupation of politicians who, it is claimed, are often more concerned with causative interventions into the nature of symbolic order. In this way Edkins highlights the distinction which can be made between 'politics' and 'the political' – a relevant issue in the context of Iraqi Kurdistan. In the absence of a legitimised state, the KRG has crafted and implemented reforms and policies which have transformed the face of politics inside the region. The adoption of models of political polycentrism, which have contemporary roots in democratic methodologies of political practice, have engendered perceptions of a Kurdish willingness to embrace liberal democracy, and an ambition to turn the region into an example for the rest of Iraq. Whatever motivations underpin this recent drive to embrace unity governance and pluralism, there have also been changes to political and ideological space within Iraqi Kurdistan which do not form a part of most mainstream discussions on Kurdish politics in Iraq.

Rather than oil or issues of territoriality, it is the issue of ideology (and ideological production) in Iraqi Kurdistan which is potentially the most serious and divisive challenge which faces the Kurdistan region as it undergoes transformation. This statement may appear grandiose but if one considers how much residual political power exists in the hands of regional actors and tribal groups in Kurdistan, who may not subjectively recognise or accept the ideological rhetoric emerging from the seats of power in Erbil and Suleymaniya, then clearly the future of the ongoing political

⁴ Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1999), pp. 1-2.

experiment in Iraqi Kurdistan remains shrouded in uncertainty. If what we call ‘Kurdish politics’ in Iraq is to be encapsulated in terms which objectify its status as part of the social fabric of a fictionalised state structure, elections, political parties, and so on, it becomes apparent that the ideological notion of ‘the Kurdish political’ in Iraq cannot be taken as in any sense given. It has not yet been defined.

The concept of ‘the Kurdish political’ cannot be accommodated into mainstream discourse analysis by merely eschewing familiar palliatives concerning ‘imagined communities’⁵ and the kaleidoscope of nationalism(s) identified by Anthony Smith and others⁶. Whereas Edkins prefers to define ‘the political’ in terms of the ‘establishment of [the] very social order which sets out a particular, historically specific account of what counts as politics and defines other areas of social life as *not* politics,’⁷ the critical post-structuralist and psychoanalytic approach taken by Žižek questions such ideological production and deems it flawed and responsible for what he describes as *subjective destitution*.⁸ If we consider the treatment of the Kurds in Iraqi politics after 1958 we see successive Arab nationalist and militaristic regimes participate in the *subjective destitution* of Kurdish politics in Iraq. Kurdish politics thereafter came to be defined by guerrilla resistance, betrayal, massacre, oppression and statelessness.

Thus the Kurds, as the subject of a tormented and frequently painful historical narrative within Iraq, were tasked with having to rehabilitate Kurdish politics and address this subjective destitution in order to move forward ideologically whilst remaining 1) part of the fabric of the Iraqi state, and 2) a distinct ethno-political identity. Althusser’s radical ethical engagement with ideological production, and his writings on what Žižek calls the ‘heroism of alienation or of subjective destitution’⁹ is, for Žižek, central to understanding the notion of ‘alienation’ as ideological. Both subjective destitution and alienation came to shape ‘the Kurdish political’ (or ideological) within Iraq, and as such the idea of there being a unitary ‘Kurdish politics’ in Iraq is symbolically linked to hegemonic narratives of the Iraqi state and dualist visions of Iraqi and Kurdish history that were not authored by rank-and-file Kurds themselves. For Žižek this is the

⁵ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991)

⁶ See A. D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Polity Press, 2006).

⁷ Edkins, *Op. Cit.*, p. 2

⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Verso, 1989), xxv

⁹ *Ibid.*, xxv

misrecognition which resides at the heart of ideology – an unavoidable misrecognition linked to historical activity and ‘assuming [the] role as agent of the historical process.’¹⁰ Kurdish statesmen have yet to find their ideological voice (or response) to the changing political position of the Kurds in Iraqi politics. The integrative and disintegrative forces associated with pursuing greater autonomy and territorial control within northern Iraq necessitate engagement with ideological production in order to sustain transition to technical civic governance (democratic or otherwise). The backdrop to this transition is the presence of increasing Kurdish geopolitical power in the region. A forceful and well-articulated ethno-political claim for the enduring autonomy of the Kurdistan region also requires a well shaped ideological foundation within that particular society. At present this discourse is absent. Recent change within the political climate of Iraqi Kurdistan has made the 1970s, Marxist derived, ideological stances of the KDP and the PUK obsolete. Michael Eppel contends that this obsolescence stems from four factors:

- 1) Iraqi Kurdistan’s constitutional basis within Iraq and its federal position.
- 2) The central political role of PUK leader Jalal Talabani as President of Iraq.
- 3) The maintenance of *Peshmerga* militias by the KDP and PUK.
- 4) Informal economic autonomy in Iraqi Kurdistan

Eppel argues that these four factors have created a post-national consciousness in Iraqi Kurdistan which has been accompanied by the emergence of a new middle class within Kurdish society whose collective values and expectations are very different to those held thirty to fifty years ago.¹¹

State-centric narratives concerning Iraq’s Kurds often constituted the subject in terms which suited the strident ideological agendas of nationalist governments in Iraq and other proximate states (notably Turkey and Syria). This de-centred the Kurds to such an extent that ideologically they have remained highly divided inside Iraq, as well as regionally; but to a lesser extent internationally. There is, therefore, a case to be made that members of the Kurdish diasporas were able to escape the ideological interpellation which continued to make Iraqi Kurds subjectively destitute until the fall of the Ba’ath regime in 2003. Applying Žižek’s analysis helps us to further grasp the misrecognition

¹⁰ Ibid., xxv

¹¹ Cf. Michael Eppel, ‘Kurdish leadership in Iraq: facing the challenges, the dangers, and the chances of post-Saddam Iraq.’ Conference paper delivered at Exeter University International Conference on *The Kurds and Kurdistan: History, Politics, Culture*. 3 April 2009.

which emerges when the ‘ideological’ and ‘the political’ are processed as merely another component of ‘Kurdish politics’ in Iraq. Žižek summarises this misrecognition as:

the process of ideological interpellation through which the subject ‘recognises’ itself as the addressee in the calling up of the ideological cause implies necessarily a certain short circuit, an illusion of the type ‘I was already there’ which, as Michel Pêcheux – who has given us the most elaborated version of the theory of interpolation – pointed out, is not without its comical effects: the short circuit of ‘no wonder you were interpellated as proletarian, when you are a proletarian’.¹²

In this way the interpellation of ‘Kurdish politics’ is revealed as having origins outside of the Kurds as agents of their own historical process. To mimic Žižek and Pêcheux by de-centering the subject with the comic statement ‘no wonder you were interpellated as *Kurdish*, when you are *a Kurd*’ shows figuratively how the notion of a unified ‘Kurdish politics’ misrecognises the ideological autonomy of the Kurds as stakeholders within Iraq through symbolising and exploiting the resonance of historic ethno-political fissures. The Kurds, it is argued here, have not until relatively recently owned the modes of ideological production necessary to define themselves as agents of the historical process inside Iraq. To understand the difference between ‘Kurdish politics’ and ‘the Kurdish political’ is key, in every sense, to understanding the complications facing the KRG as it goes about the task of defining itself not just as an autonomous political force, but also an ideological one resident within a *de facto* independent entity. Whether or not providence will allow the KRG the power and longevity to assume the role of *agent of the historical process* has yet to be seen.

The Unrecognised Entity as Ideological Object

Harnessing the potential of ‘the Kurdish political’ as a national commodity in the setting of a Kurdish unrecognised entity has already paid discrete dividends to the KRG in the form of relative political stability and autonomy . This is something very different to the issue of ‘Kurdish politics’ which, among many Kurdish and Iraqi nationalists, remains a divisive and politically inflammatory topic due to the after-effect of historical narratives and imagery associated with the ideological production of a status quo ante which included Arab nationalist movements such as Ba’athism. There is nothing implicitly

¹² Slavoj Žižek, Op. Cit., xxv

ideological about ‘Kurdish politics’ per se, just as there is no ideological given in the terms ‘Shi’a’ or ‘Sunni politics’. To argue otherwise posits a fictionalised notion of political ideology as communitarian in both an Iraqi setting as well as in that of the wider Middle East. ‘Politics’ is contested; ‘the political’ is the frame of reference which makes politics ideological.¹³

Edkins clarifies the distinction between ‘politics’ and ‘the political’ by describing the former as ‘decision making and ideological partisanship’; and the latter as ‘to do with the establishment of that very social order which sets out a particular, historically specific account of what counts as politics and defines other areas of social life as *not* politics’¹⁴. Edkins’ distinction is important as we see this dynamic reproduced in unrecognised entities to the same extent as it is observable in sovereign states. It is not the case that illegitimate status infers a methodological bankruptcy upon an unrecognised entity’s functions and processes. This is a realisation which remains only lightly covered in the writings of Pegg and other scholars focusing on unrecognised entities.

Whereas Pegg concentrates on the distillation of methodologies pursued by *de facto* states (a process through which he arrives at the normative conclusion that *de facto* entities are all pursuing anachronistic legitimisation strategies), it is evident that unrecognised entities are capable of linking power and social order in ways that confer legitimacy from within. The KRG, for example, exercises a power capable of maintaining an optimum level of what Claude Lefort termed ‘generalised obedience and allegiance’¹⁵ which ‘implies a certain type of social division and articulation, as well as a certain type of representation... concerning the legitimacy of the social order.’¹⁶ These social divisions, articulations and representations are well formed in Iraqi Kurdistan as the KRG and respective political parties within the territory have begun the process of refiguring the Kurdish political landscape in the region. This outcome points to the existence of an unrecognised entity in northern Iraq which is already further ahead in its ideological development than the metropolitan state of which it still remains a part. It partly explains why the government in Iraqi Kurdistan is able to make bold assertions

¹³ Edkins, Op. Cit., p. 2

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1986), p. 282, cited in Edkins, Op. Cit., p. 3

¹⁶ Ibid.

about its territory being symbolic of an ‘other’ Iraq¹⁷. The propagandist rhetoric touted loudly on the international stage concerning socio-economic conditions inside Iraqi Kurdistan point to an emboldened awareness of how far ‘the Kurdish political’ has shifted since the 1970s and 1980s. This bold optimism for a bright future in the Kurdistan region is partly an expression of a new-found ideological coherence within the KRG and between the main Kurdish political parties.

This ideological coherence hints at the presence of a legitimisation process (or transition) under way that is shaping both power and social order inside Iraqi Kurdistan. Here lies a difficult problem for international society in that Iraqi Kurdistan is rapidly developing and advancing the legitimacy of its *own* social and political order outside of a framework dictated by either the Iraqi state or norms laid down in international law. The propaganda emanating from the KRG and its representatives can be understood as the manifestation of *fantasy* which often accompanies transition from one social form to another after contestation and struggles for power have subsided. This *fantasy* is linked to a symbolic ideal of Kurdish independence, yet it is not essentially secessionist or separatist in rhetorical terms. This realisation takes us beyond notions of unrecognised entities as criminalised separatist badlands and toward an appreciation of subtle dynamics which appear at the creation of new states. To quote Edkins:

...what is important about power is that it *establishes* a social order and a corresponding form of legitimacy. Power, for Lefort, does not “exist” in any sort of naked form, before legitimation: Rather, the ideological processes of legitimation produce certain representations of power. For a political analysis, in the broadest sense, what needs to be called into question are the conditions of possibility that produced or made conceivable this particular representation of power. The question is, “What change in the principles of legitimacy, what reshaping of the system of beliefs, in the way of apprehending reality, enabled such a representation of power to emerge?”¹⁸

¹⁷ The Kurdistan Development Corporation’s “The Other Iraq” Campaign of 2006 provides an interesting snapshot of changing political narratives surrounding autonomy in northern Iraq and the development of public diplomacy aimed at marketing Iraqi Kurdistan as an attractive investment opportunity. The website of the campaign carries the following text, “Have you seen the Other Iraq? It’s spectacular. It’s peaceful. It’s joyful. Fewer than two hundred US troops are stationed here. Arabs, Kurds and westerners all vacation together. Welcome to Iraqi-Kurdistan!” <http://www.theotheriraq.com/index.html> (Accessed 17.05.2010).

¹⁸ Edkins, Op. Cit., p. 3

To answer Lefort's question it can be argued that the difference between 'representations of power' and the 'conditions of possibility' which allow such representations to emerge resides in the tactics pursued, not in the strategy. For instance, the idea that the unrecognised state has some kind of political responsibility to the metropolitan 'parent' territory from which it has informally seceded – that is a strategic question. The question is whether or not the unrecognised state goes about this process of withdrawal in order to arrive at the functioning representations and articulations of power which are often seen in these situations at the tactical level.

Maintaining a functional autonomy in the absence of *de jure* recognition is, in the short term, about tactics and the overall strategy of which they form a part. Separatism (taken in its most literal sense without emotive negativity) is a tactical process insofar as it is one which does not always need to be couched in strategic narratives of recognition or legitimacy from the outset. This is a key point which forms a continual stumbling block for political science discourses on unrecognised entities in the international system. The value judgements placed upon unrecognised entities by normative assessments of legitimacy and recognition automatically externalise and disarticulate our understanding of the problem. It becomes difficult to escape the inertia of *de jure* thinking on statehood and unconsciously, narratives on unrecognised entities revert back to discourses which are biased in favour of territorial integrity.

It matters little that the fortunes of a particular case (for example Kosovo's part recognition) may indicate a gradual mellowing of attitudes toward unrecognised entities, or that 'the image that dominates in the media, in foreign ministries and in the limited academic literature is very much a negative one,'¹⁹ as neither signify a paradigmatic shift in our understanding of separatism or secession. The field of study is, as implied throughout this thesis, constrained by continual Ptolemization over old paradigms when, in fact, a Copernican revolution in thinking is needed which transforms the basic frameworks of our understanding of unrecognised entities. International responses, policies, conventions, interventions, agreements and laws represent the external - the peripheral - and are not, as can so easily be assumed, the locus around which the

¹⁹ Nina Caspersen, 'From Kosovo to Karabakh: International Responses to De Facto States,' *Südosteuropa*, 56:1, 2008, p. 6

ideological and psychological roots of separatism and secession are formed. The assumption that legitimacy and *de jure* recognition form the ideological backbone of the *de facto* state problem not only puts the cart before the horse but perpetuates the myth that statehood, in all its forms, is considered sacrosanct by peoples who have often been at the receiving end of egregious abuses enacted in the name of statecraft and statehood respectively. Put simply, international relations and political science discourses invariably opt into a condescension which, if it does not play the 'ethnicity' card, chooses to essentialise unrecognised entities by emphasising their subaltern status through a mythologised hunger for legitimacy. Certainly, there may be bureaucratic elites within unrecognised entities who court (or are courted by) international society at a level which suggests that powerbrokers in such regions aspire to the same level of *authenticity* as other states, but it is misleading to suggest that this defines the phenomena of unrecognised entities globally.

Area Studies specialists and political scientists are often guilty of adopting such theoretical conservatism and choosing to ignore other ways of understanding the unrecognised entity. Robert Jackson's statement that 'To be a sovereign state today one needs only to have been a formal colony yesterday,'²⁰ is a standard minimalist dictum of the type so often encountered in the scant literature on unrecognised entities. Such statements are of questionable utility when discussing power and ideology in highly ambiguous scenarios of this type and are representative of analytical discourses which are rapidly becoming anachronistic because of the dualist world-views upon which they were founded. There is a categorical bias in Jacksonian statements which belies a Eurocentric, imperialist heritage which, it seems, remains entrenched in international relations discourses on sovereignty. This ambivalence roots unrecognised entities in their specific gravity as problematic objects in the international system for they remain grounded by the space onto which they are mapped - both in geographical, political, ideological and security terms. Given that political and regional security contexts are inevitably a significant ingredient in what might be assumed to be the functionality of an unrecognised entity, it might be telling to ask how autonomy could be more than a

²⁰ Robert Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 17

conceptual ideal for these entities, and whether the numerous forms and narratives through which *de facto* states and the unrecognised entities are conceived within are a function of necessary focus or the insecurities of the international society of states.

Asymmetries of Power and Ideological Development

The relationship between sovereign states and the unrecognised entities in their midst is characterised by an extreme asymmetry of power. This asymmetry of power is a strong influence on ideological formation in unrecognised entities and has a direct bearing on the conflicts which emerge and the political narratives which surround them. It is important to note how the asymmetrical relationship between the sovereign state and the unrecognised state is reproduced in mainstream thinking on the issue through the overarching use of conceptual connotations symbolic of illegitimacy. Both parties to this uneven relationship construct narratives on legitimacy which symbolise their inconsistent ideological stances. As Žižek remarks, in ideology ‘one can have one’s cake and eat it’²¹ and nothing could be closer to the truth in the case of state-like entities. International relations arguments such as Dov Lynch’s assertion that ‘there are states and there is little else’²² in the international system remain pregnant with ideological notions of sovereignty which conceal an essential bias. As Edward Walker pointed out in 1998 ‘The Chechen Government calls Chechnya “The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria” and may reconstitute itself as “The Islamic Republic of Chechnya,” Karabakh calls itself “The Republic of Nagorno Karabakh,” and is often referred to by Armenian nationalists as “Artsakh,” while Abkhazia’s self-designation is “The Republic of Abkhazia.”’²³ Such self-designations are indicative of grassroots ideological formation in the service of separatism which, in the context of an asymmetrical relationship with proximate sovereign states, defines the unrecognised entity as not just a contested political space, but one in which legitimacy ultimately lies in the ideological coherence which underpins secessionist ambition.

²¹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 2008), pp. 95-96

²² Dov Lynch, *Engaging Eurasia’s Separatist States* (Washington DC: United States Institute for Peace, 2004), p. 18

²³ Edward Walker, ‘No Peace, No War in the Caucasus: Secessionist Conflicts in Chechnya, Abkhazia and Nagorno Karabakh,’ Centre for Science and International Affairs, *Occasional Paper*, February 1998, p. 3

The situation is modified in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan. Factional fighting between the PUK and the KDP reached a settlement by September 1998 and the parties received not only public recognition by the Clinton administration but a framework for cooperation set out in the Washington Accord²⁴ of the same year. The status quo has been maintained despite the ongoing fragility of the situation in northern Iraq. The benefits of the Oil For Food Programme and US/UK military enforcement of the 'No-Fly Zone' over the greater part of the Kurdish controlled provinces, allowed for alteration of the asymmetry which had previously existed between the Kurdish polity in northern Iraq and Saddam Hussein's regime in Baghdad. In the wake of the Washington Accord (and being insulated from direct political interference from Baghdad) the *fantasy* of an independent Kurdish state was able to flourish and the entente between the KDP and the PUK provided fertile soil for notions of Kurdish identity and nationhood to be articulated in new, ostensibly state-centric, ideological terms.

Political intrigue between the Kurdish political parties and other actors in the regional and international politics of the Middle East is not of primary concern when one considers the problems of power and ideology inherent in discussions of non-sovereign state-like entities. In Iraqi Kurdistan there is an explicit dualism contained in the rhetoric of the political leadership and this, it can be argued, is not only an aggravating factor in the relationship between the KRG and the society it attempts to govern, but is also a contradiction which bedevils Kurdish nationalist ambition. The problem is outlined by Carl Dahlman in a paper entitled *The Political Geography of Kurdistan* (2002). In this paper Dahlman identifies the locus of the dualism which resides at the very heart of the KRG mandate. He writes 'Thus, while northern Iraq under the Kurdistan Regional Government would appear to be a pseudo-state, in that it has all the trappings of a sovereign territorial government except international recognition, its political leadership, the KDP and PUK, appears to give no indication that it will emerge as a separate state.'²⁵ Dahlman goes on to suggest in a footnote that although other analysts (in this case Kolossov and O'Loughlin, 1999) have preferred to identify Kurdistan as a *quasi-state* 'a

²⁴ For a full text of the agreement see Michael Gunter, *The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq: A political Analysis* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 101-108

²⁵ Carl Dahlman, 'The Political Geography of Kurdistan,' *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 43:4, (2002), p. 25.

chaotic and ephemeral space, often involved in illicit flows and “half-institutionalised” control’²⁶, he argues that spaces such as Iraqi Kurdistan are better described under the *pseudo-state* concept due to their unsettled political status. The very fact that the KRG gives no indication that the territory it governs will emerge as a separate state, yet at the same time promotes itself in ideological terms which emphasise a societal ascent to autonomy, self-governance and the trappings of statehood creates a paradoxical antagonism between the inhabitants of Iraqi Kurdistan and what Žižek terms ‘a cause which in itself does not exist - [a cause] which is present only in a series of effects, but always in a distorted, displaced way.’²⁷

Žižek here is presenting us with his summary analysis of the *Lacanian Real* – a ‘brute, pre-symbolic reality’ which, along with *symbolic* order and the *Imaginary* create a three tiered cake of ‘structural effect’ (displacements) which account for the ‘distortions of the symbolic structure,’ distortions which, in a Hegelian sense, lead toward the realisation that it is senseless attempting to determine when the Kurdish “state” will (or will not) materialise in northern Iraq due to the fact it must be ‘presupposed’ or, as Žižek states, recognised as constituting a ‘fantasy scenario’.²⁸ The unrecognised entity, then, like the Lacanian Real, can be constructed as an entity which, although it does not exist in the sense of ‘really existing’ as a state (or taking place in reality as a state)²⁹, nonetheless exercises what Žižek defines as ‘[having] a series of properties...a certain structural causality...it can produce a series of effects in the symbolic reality of subjects.’³⁰

It is not difficult to illustrate how the unrecognised entity in Iraqi Kurdistan occupies a space whereby the symbolic realities which surround it such as those in adjacent Arab provinces, Turkey, Syria, Iran (as well as the intra-societal dynamic between interest groups within the ethno-political make-up of northern Iraq) are destabilised by the very fantasy or desire for a Kurdish state in their midst. This is the effect on a particular geopolitical location of a territory which harbours the ‘structural causality’ of a state – and is anchored in the ideological rhetoric of statehood through the

²⁶ Ibid., footnote, p.25; See also Klavimir Kolossov and John O’Loughlin, ‘Pseudo-States as Harbingers of a New Geopolitics: The Example of the Trans-Dniester Moldovan Republic (TMR),’ in D. Newman, ed., *Boundaries, Territory, and Postmodernity* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1999)

²⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Verso, 1989), p. 184

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 182-183

²⁹ Ibid., p.183

³⁰ Ibid.

public diplomacy pronouncements of a coalition government, yet, at the very point of establishment it dissipates, dissolves, and leaves in its place the Lacanian Real revealing the *premature ideal* of independent statehood - a state which only existed at a *symbolic* and rhetorical levels within the political imagination.

The unrecognised entity is therefore a paradoxical concept due to the vicissitudes of its precarious existence and the ways in which it is able to blur the conceptual parameters which govern sovereign organisation in the international system. It is symbolic (in its illegitimacy and ambiguous status) of unacknowledged ethno-political ambition; it is capable of creating a state-like order which can be said to be illusory; it contains the structural causality to affect the symbolic order of states and territories around it, yet may still exist formally as part of another country or polity; and it exists as an *imagined* state through the representations and fantasies of its peoples, parties and leaders – yet they can deny its actuality at the same time. To some extent this paradox is apparent in unrecognised states the world over at different stages and levels of their political existence. This contradictory and paradoxical dialecticism (which often accompanies the ethno-political ambition for statehood) can be framed in terms of those dominant strategies necessary to construct state-like realities in what are often fragile and unstable political situations.

We return, then, to the title of this chapter for it is here that we come closest to identifying the *fiction* of ideology in unrecognised states. It is not claimed that ideology in unrecognised entities is in any way a fictitious phenomenon but rather that the creation of symbolic ‘state-like’ order in ideological terms - terms which suggest an otherness which is *not* commensurate with observable reality, places ideology at the level of the fictive in unrecognised entities. That is to say, ideology (symbolic representations of order and the fantasy of ‘a state’) and reality (political outcomes as they are observable in the here and now) have separate trajectories and utilities in this context. Often the two appear utterly divorced on a theoretical level and this differential relationship is replicated at the formal level. For instance, academic inquiry often ignores the symbolic narrative eschewed by parties and leaders of unrecognised entities in favour of the ‘physical’ structures of elections, politics, regional relationships and conflicts. We are then left with an empirical silence on issues such as ideological change and ethno-

political tensions inside unrecognised entities themselves. This was the case in early 2006 when riots erupted in the south of Iraqi Kurdistan inside the town of Halabja. Kurdmedia gave the following description:

The disturbances occurred on the morning of the anniversary of the gas attack that launched the town's notoriety. About 7,000 demonstrators protested that they have been forgotten by the central government [KRG], *whose officials make a once-yearly appearance to commiserate with them about the tragedy but allegedly forget about them the rest of the year*. The security forces are reported to have opened fire, killing a 14-year-old boy and injuring several others.³¹

Although evidently sensationalised through journalistic franchise, the salience of the Halabja riots, and the significance of Halabja to the identity of the Kurdish peoples, should not be overlooked. The town of Halabja remains the most infamous symbol of the Iraqi government's *Anfal* Campaigns during the late 1980s and now experiences a political existence inside an unrecognised entity.

On 16th March 1988, Iraqi forces conducted a bombardment of Halabja with chemical weaponry³² which resulted in the deaths of approximately 5000 civilians³³. As Stansfield correctly highlights, 'Halabja was also not an isolated incident, but the assault on the town remains the single most emotive memory of how the Kurds have suffered at the hands of the Iraqi government.'³⁴ The memory of Halabja has motivated Kurds to pursue autonomy with conviction and vigour, seizing such opportunities as they arise. Kurds the world over see Halabja (and the wider genocide of which it was a part) as a symbolic justification for their right to self-determination and autonomy in their historic homeland. Few would disagree openly with such an articulation of Halabja's symbolic externality, and its powerful effect on shaping Kurdish nationalist ambition. It is, to quote Louis Althusser, a poignant illustration of how "'ideas' or 'representations'...which seem to make up ideology do not have an ideal (*idéale, idéelle*) or spiritual existence, but a material existence.'³⁵ Although it can be argued elsewhere that the events of 16th March 1988 have a 'spiritual' resonance for all Kurds, ideologically the representation of

³¹ Extract from online article published in *Asia Times* entitled 'The Kurdish Defection' by Iason Athanasiadis, <<http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=11748>> Accessed 06.05.2008. Emphasis added.

³² See Gareth Stansfield, *Iraq* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 115

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), p. 39

Halabja has a material existence which, as the recent unrest suggests, is not successfully co-opted by the relatively novel ideological constructions produced by the KRG. That the residents of Halabja are alleged to have damaged the memorial sculpture³⁶ to the event which holds such gravitas for the cause of Kurdish self-determination, suggests a strong social antagonism between rank-and-file Kurds and their administrative leadership. Such antagonism is explicitly ideological in that the *image* of progress within the unrecognised entity has found itself in the presence of a material, pre-symbolic representation, its own critique, in the form of localised socio-political antagonisms – antagonisms focused on perceptions of progress as opposed to civic nationalism, territorialism and political bureaucracy.

A Marxian critique of ideology is applicable here as rank-and-file Kurds who are fiercely ambitious and loyal to their ethno-political cause have traditionally been participants in defining the *essence* of their national struggle. They are not, however, participants in defining the essence of the unrecognised entity in which they now find themselves a part. Marxists would argue that as long as social relations inside Iraqi Kurdistan are dominated by Capital (and the distribution of resources by a political and familial elite), such antagonisms and tense relations between social groups will persist and lead to further expressions of political and ideological frustration. At the level of ideology, it can be argued that the symbolic face of surreptitious statecraft - the image created by the KRG of a progressive, stable and commercially ascendant entrepôt Kurdistan – is antagonistic both internally and externally for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the KRG is complicit in the creation of the false consciousness, or ideological fantasy that it functions as a *state* government. This ideological condition is subverted by the lack of legal recognition attained by Iraqi Kurdistan as an independent entity in the international system. As soon as the symbolic order of statehood is crafted around such a false consciousness, the gradual dissolution of fantasies surrounding representation, equality, and prosperity starts to occur, thereby exposing the promise of bourgeois freedoms to critique from the politically non-affiliated amongst those with the least stake in the elite's ideological narrative. Equally important is the impact of

³⁶ See article by Khalid Khayati, 'Newroz: When "La joie de vivre" and suffering coincide,' *The Kurdish Globe*, No. 102, March 19, 2007, p. 2

economic predation by actors forming the political elite within unrecognised entities. Very often corruption and other predatory behaviours by elites in unrecognised entities take the 'states in all but name' thesis beyond parody. This is the danger of applying ideological universals to fragile socio-political environments such as those found in unrecognised entities. As Žižek explains:

...every ideological universal – for example freedom, equality – is 'false' in so far as it necessarily includes a specific case which breaks its unity, lays open its falsity. Freedom, for example: a universal notion comprising a number of species (freedom of speech and press, freedom of consciousness, freedom of commerce, political freedom, and so on) but also, by means of a structural necessity, a specific freedom (that of the worker to sell freely his own labour on the market) which subverts this universal notion. That is to say, this freedom is the very opposite of effective freedom: by selling his labour 'freely', the worker *loses* his freedom – the real content of this free act of sale is the worker's enslavement to capital. The crucial point is, of course, that it is precisely this paradoxical freedom, the form of its opposite, which closes the circle of 'bourgeois freedoms'.³⁷

Žižek identifies here a paradoxical construction of freedom similar to one that resides at the heart of the new socio-economic order inside Iraqi Kurdistan (something which shall be discussed in the following chapter). The KRG is avowedly committed to pursuing the freedom of commerce associated with free-market economics, but this freedom to set an economic agenda independent of the Iraqi state is lost – its falsity exposed as an ideological fiction – by the intense antagonisms and interactions which exist between the KRG and the government of Iraq. It is at this point that the concept of Iraqi Kurdistan symbolising the 'Other' Iraq is laid bare and exposed as a fiction created in the public domain by the 'pseudo-state' ideological apparatus of the KRG. As the 2006 unrest in Halabja reveals, the attempt to suppress rejection of the 'new' symbolic order inside KRG controlled territory will lose its force in the face of its material critique.

To further complicate the paradox within which the government of an unrecognised entity finds itself, it is important to examine the overall locus around which many of the problems of unrecognised entities revolve. Central to any new appreciation of the vicissitudes of governance in an ambiguous state-like predicament is an aspect of legitimisation which has so far eluded most discussions of the problem. This is the problem of how government (or the 'art' of government) is enabled to function independently of sovereignty in an unrecognised entity, and whether this necessitates a

³⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 16-17

form of governance *ad libitum* in response to political games and the desire for favourable strategic outcomes. The unrecognised entity is possibly the barest and most exposed of geopolitical concepts. Put plainly, of the myriad forms of governance and statecraft in the international system, it is the incompleteness – the burden of illegitimacy – experienced by unrecognised entities which creates a situation whereby the government and political parties have often little more than ethno-territorial claims to back-up their continued presence in the international system. These ethno-territorial claims must maintain a fundamental integrity in the eyes of international law and, by necessity, must also have crystallised what Foucault called the ‘reason of state’³⁸ rather than a vague reliance on popular support.

This ‘reason’ is a primary component (or ‘preoccupation’) of sovereignty and is highly relevant in the context of ambiguous state-like scenarios. Foucault argues that the ‘state is governed according to rational principles which are intrinsic to it and which cannot be derived solely from natural or divine laws or the principles of wisdom and prudence’³⁹. This observation is an important point of departure for any analysis of unrecognised entities. Firstly, international relations and political science analysis does not often place a sufficient level of emphasis on how the asymmetric position of governments in unrecognised entities necessitates the deployment of an ‘art of government’ which utilises what Foucault identifies as those *rational* principles which are intrinsic to the realities of governing (with or without sovereignty). Secondly, the case for recognition made by unrecognised entities, especially those in Eurasia and the Caucasus, is often based on an ethno-political wisdom which enables legitimacy to be rationalised in terms of affiliations with surrounding states (parent and patron states alike) which, in turn, ensures a longevity that far surpasses what would be achievable through a more antagonistic secessionist agenda or armed conflict. To some extent, then, unrecognised entities are able to deploy the ‘natural and divine laws’⁴⁰ of ethno-political

³⁸ Michel Foucault, ‘Governmentality,’ In G. Burchell et al. (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 97.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-7.

⁴⁰ Foucault, *Op. Cit.*

affiliation in order to fill the gap left by the often occurring absence of 'rational principles'⁴¹ which justify the separatist agenda.

Iraqi Kurdistan is a good example of how the art of government without sovereignty (and direct ethno-political affiliation to another proximate territorial entity) makes its position particularly problematic. Iraqi Kurdistan cannot pursue an overtly separatist agenda without the support of an external power or plurality of regional advocates. In the absence of the break-up of the Iraqi state it is highly unlikely that Iraq's Kurds would be supported in the creation of a separatist territorial entity by any foreign power. What Iraqi Kurdistan lacks, therefore, is the external support of a proximate, ethno-politically allied, sovereign entity which will support and accommodate a Kurdish separatist agenda. The geopolitical matrix which surrounds Iraqi Kurdistan is, in this way, extremely disadvantageous from a secessionist perspective. The Kurdish nationalist Mahabad Republic, it can be argued, fell-apart in 1946 once the support of Soviet Russia – a proximate guarantor of the project's survival - was withdrawn, and the way left open for the forces of the Iranian state to reassert control over this breakaway Kurdish entity. Developments over half a century ago illustrate how important it is for any attempt at fashioning an independent Kurdish state to have a proximate guarantor of *physical* protection from conflicts arising as a result of enmities created with surrounding regimes by such an exercise. Support for secession, in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, remains highly unlikely to materialise given the disadvantages of the political landscape into which an independent Kurdish state would have to be placed.

The concept of an unrecognised entity requiring a proximate ally or ethno-political guarantor was highlighted by Pål Kolstø in his work *The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States* (2006), in which he argues that some *quasi-states* become dependent upon support from an 'external patron' in order to defend themselves 'against states with a well-functioning state apparatus, a solid economy, and good defence capabilities.'⁴² However, Kolstø's analysis of the behaviour of 'patron' states in relation to their unrecognised clients assumes that the situation is one of expediency in order to survive (on the part of the unrecognised entity), and offers us little insight into

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Pål Kolstø, 'The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States,' *Journal of Peace Research*, 43:6 (2006), p. 733.

why a sovereign state may adopt a position whereby they are willing to act as an advocate for the autonomous entity. In fact, Kolstø asserts that *quasi-states* are often far from pliant and often ‘wag the dog’⁴³ in order to pursue agendas of their own. Kolstø’s point of departure for his analysis of the relationship between unrecognised entities and their external ‘patrons’ is very much the now contestable idea that *quasi-states* in the Caucasus are ‘states in all but name’. The criteria upon which he bases the development of his argument could be mistaken for representing an ethnocentric romanticism whereby the existence of the entity as a hegemonic ethno-political structure (with the alleged popular support of its denizens [sic.]) is all that is needed to fulfil the ‘reason of state’. Such a view precludes our understanding of the ties and relationships between proximate sovereign advocates and separatist movements which predate the pursuit of statecraft or the secessionist agenda itself. In this way, Kolstø’s analysis of the relationship between the unrecognised entity and its external ‘patron’ is ahistorical as it removes itself from the patterns of political economic history in which the evolution and formation of the unrecognised entity is nearly always grounded.

Recent tensions between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia illustrate the dilemma faced by the Kurds as they attempt to fashion an ideology around political developments in northern Iraq. Unlike the unrecognised government of South Ossetia, the KRG has no powerful regional advocate for a separatist agenda. It instead relies on close ties with Washington and its European allies to vouchsafe its continued status as an autonomous Kurdish enclave inside Iraq. The governments of Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq are historically opposed to the creation of an independent Kurdish state and this scenario isolates the ambitions of the KRG and Iraqi nationalists from the ethno-political support necessary to pursue a separatist agenda. This again illustrates how Iraqi Kurdistan is dissimilar to many of the *de facto*/unrecognised states in Eurasia and the Caucasus. Even the Kosovo option lacks an essential utility in our discussion of Iraqi Kurdistan’s predicament. Kosovo has a unique, historic, ethno-religious status as a Muslim enclave in the former Yugoslavia which, in the context of this discussion, provided the territory (in its pre- and post- independence forms) with the necessary regional status to strengthen its ‘reason of state.’ This crucial determinant of viability –

⁴³ Ibid.

or ability to secede – is absent in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, and whilst support from Washington and other international powers is politically advantageous and strengthens the position of the Kurds regionally, it makes problematic the case for secession and reinforces the danger of the KRG being perceived as regional belligerents, as well as creating an image of the Kurdistan region as a Lilly pad for foreign interests in the region. Equally, pro-Kurdish policymakers in the West must tread carefully and avoid the forceful promotion of Kurdish ethno-political or territorial exceptionalism in northern Iraq as it could further destabilise an already unstable Iraqi political environment.

The ‘reification’ of the KRG agenda at the international level, and its rhetorical camouflage in the borrowed robes of neo-liberalism, poses a threefold problem when the ideology behind the ‘reason of state’ is exposed to critique. Firstly, there is the problem of ethno-political ‘back-up’ in the form of the absence of any proximate territorial advocate or sovereign affiliate. This reality precludes the creation of an ideological case based on ethnic affiliation to a political power external to the Iraqi state. Secondly, territorial claims are frustrated at the level of ideological production by the trans-nationality of Kurdish ethno-politics. This trans-national dynamic frustrates the case for an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq as the argument can be put forward that Iraqi Kurdistan is but a part of a greater geographical region that composed historic Kurdistan. In the same context, the human geography of the region suggests that the majority of the Kurdish population resides outside of Iraq’s borders in Turkey, Syria and Iran (as well as the wider Kurdish diaspora). This makes it difficult for the KRG to rely on the legitimising properties of ethnic nationalist sentiment without creating a *transcendental* constituency for an ideological agenda which antagonises the sovereign states which surround it. In this case, such antagonisms are often predicated upon the destabilising potential of an independent Kurdish territory. If territorial nationalism is pursued too forcefully in northern Iraq, the territorial specificity of the Iraqi context becomes bogged down in wider theoretical questions concerning regional entitlement to ethnic separation, and the essential ‘reason of state’ is lost in a fog of emotive national idealism.

The third problem which confronts the KRG’s attempts at constricting the ideological basis for their ‘reason of state’ lies in the pursuit of the commercial, free-

market liberalism that has become the modern *raison d'être* for a progressive Kurdistan. As examined previously (and in the following chapter), the 'bourgeois freedoms' heralded by the adoption of the market principle (in what has historically been a pre-industrial society) are very difficult to guarantee to *all* Kurds in a society whose social stratifications are symbolically and figuratively articulated within the administrative model of the KRG and the KDP / PUK axis. So, at three levels we see the way in which the situation in northern Iraq makes a highly problematic backdrop for the creation of an ideology that reinforces what Foucault called the 'reason of state'. At these levels the problem also reveals how Iraqi Kurdistan can be separated from those universal classifications which once drove our understanding of unrecognised entities, or so-called *de facto* states. It is, as has been illustrated here, very misleading to promote a normative vision of unrecognised entities in the international system as there are hitherto unexamined variables which distinguish and separate them all. These variables are the product of a continual process of flux and adaptation which in turn is a response – a dominant survival strategy – deployed in the absence of the formal protections afforded by legal sovereignty.

Althusser's analysis of Marxist theories of the state (in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, 1994) points us toward a number of useful conceptual definitions regarding state power which, in the context of a notional 'reason of state' discussed previously, suggest the presence of other paradoxes associated with power and ideology in an unrecognised state-like situation. In his essay entitled *The State*⁴⁴ Althusser argues that 'the State (and its existence in its apparatus) has no meaning except as a function of *State power*.'⁴⁵ His argument here makes a key distinction between state *apparatus* and state *power* due to the fact that the two are not necessarily coterminous. So, in the context of an unrecognised entity, a similarity with Althusser's model can be discerned. There is, on the one hand, a key difference between state power(s) (as it/they appear in their mutated form in entities lacking *de jure* sovereignty) and the state apparatus created in the absence of *de jure* recognition of such powers. This contradiction is implicit in the

⁴⁴ Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),' in Slavoj Žižek (ed.) *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 106- 113

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108

relationship between Iraqi Kurdistan (as a conceptually ambiguous state-like 'object') and the other realities over which such an 'object' is superimposed.

A problem which frustrates the realisation of an independent sovereignty in Iraqi Kurdistan is that state apparatus and political power remain in a state of ideological disarticulation. Neither the civil bureaucratic nor the political elite have, in fact, successfully managed to develop a coherent ideological narrative around statehood that unifies the two positions. So how does this lack of connectivity between the pseudo-state apparatus and pseudo-state power affect the relationship between Iraqi Kurdistan and the ideological dreams of Kurdish nationalism? The overarching problem lies in the fact that the KRG has, in its attempt to achieve legitimacy for its autonomy agenda, created a virtual state apparatus – the machinery of governance and state coercion – that, as Althusser points out 'may survive political events which affect the possession of State power.'⁴⁶ Therefore, in the setting of a federal Iraq – something which the KRG remains in favour of at the rhetorical level - the collapse or decline of the virtual 'state power' attained by the KRG (either by the strengthened political power of the Iraqi Government, Turkish opposition to an independent Kurdistan, factional and tribal infighting between Kurdish political factions, discredited Kurdish belligerency and so on) could be effected whilst leaving the physical apparatus intact inside Iraqi Kurdistan. The potential for such an outcome suggests that not only can state power and state apparatus be distinguished in unrecognised entities (as they can be in sovereign states) but, as can be seen in Iraqi Kurdistan, the potential remains for the pseudo-state apparatus to survive the ideological power currently held by the KRG and the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA).

The Marxist theory behind this interpretation of state power in unrecognised entities is explicit. Althusser summarises the 'Marxist theory of the State' in terms of the defining theoretical claims that Marxist classics have used to define state apparatus:

- (1) The State is the repressive State apparatus, (2) State Power and State apparatus must be distinguished, (3) the objective of the class struggle concerns State power, and in consequence the use of the State apparatus by the classes (or alliance of classes or of fractions of classes) holding State power as a function of their class objectives...⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Althusser, *Op. Cit.*, p. 109

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109

If state power and state apparatus are distinguished in line with common theoretical identifications of Marxist analysis, it then becomes possible to highlight another aspect of the problematic situation encountered in Iraqi Kurdistan's ambiguous-status scenario. At the informal level, power in Iraqi Kurdistan is divided coterminously between the *coercive* apparatus of the KDP and the PUK, and the formal pseudo-state apparatus of the KNA and KRG administrative and legal structures. There is a functional intertwining of these political apparatus at many levels – including at the ideological level. At the level of *physical* political structures it is nearly impossible to pinpoint the exact location of Althusser's *Ideological State Apparatus* within the frameworks of the KRG and KNA. Therefore, it is necessary to consider here the externality of such ideological state mechanisms from those physical political articulations associated with functional governance inside Iraqi Kurdistan.

Althusser suggests that a problem inherent in discussions surrounding *Ideological State Apparatuses* (or ISAs in their abbreviated form) appears when we identify the distinctiveness of their *ideological* functions in relation to the (coercive) State apparatus exemplified by the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons and so on⁴⁸. Althusser goes further by explaining that 'while there is *one* (Repressive) State Apparatus, there is a *plurality* of ISAs. Even presupposing that it exists, the unity that constitutes this plurality of ISAs as a body is not immediately visible.'⁴⁹ What Althusser achieves here is the identification of other apparatuses which exert a profound influence on ideology outside of the formal coercive apparatus of the state. Taken as a list, Althusser's ISAs take the form of religious, educational, familial, legal, political, trade union, communications, and cultural *ideological* apparatus⁵⁰. Althusser also makes the further distinction that whereas the state apparatus dominates the *public* domain; ideological state apparatuses form a significant part of the *private* domain.⁵¹ Althusser here points out that the apparatus of reproduction in capital's economies includes not only the reproduction of the means of production but also the reproduction of ideology through apparently autonomous mediating institutions:

⁴⁸ Althusser, Op. Cit., p. 110

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 111

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 110-111

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 111

The ideological cannot be read off from the economic or vice versa. Under particular historical circumstances, an articulation between these relatively autonomous practices can produce an overdetermination. If ideology is seen as a set of practices, it can be regarded as being maintained and reproduced by what Althusser calls ideological state apparatuses (ISAs): schools, the family, and so on. The development of historical forces takes place in part with the ideological dominance of the ruling class reproduced through the mechanisms of the ISAs... [Althusser] is concerned with how ideologies operate through the unconscious as representations of the imaginary relations of individuals to their real conditions of existence.⁵²

The distinction that state apparatus function at both the coercive and ideological levels, and at the levels of the public and private domains, brings us closer to understanding the problematic nature of ideology in unrecognised entities. Where this two-level dynamic manifests itself in the example of Iraqi Kurdistan is quite clear. The KRG and parliamentary KNA have control over the public domain in so far as they purport to have control over the means of coercion and production within the pseudo-state apparatus (i.e., what Althusser terms the ‘repressive’ state apparatus), but it is clear that in the private domain of religious, tribal, cultural, ethnic, educational, commercial and financial ideological apparatuses; society in Iraqi Kurdistan is deeply fragmented ideologically with no single actor or mechanism able to construct a dominant narrative or identity which presupposes the ideological foundations of an independent Kurdish state-like entity. Furthermore the ‘State’ of the Kurdish ruling classes in Iraqi Kurdistan is rooted firmly in the private realm (in terms of their *ideological* production) as is demonstrated by the often tense relations between the KDP and the PUK as they negotiate power-sharing and the distribution of wealth between their respective fiefdoms in Iraqi Kurdistan (a relationship also symbolised by the distribution of leadership roles between Kurdish statesmen in Iraqi politics). Stansfield specifically raises the question of how the effect of ‘new’ regionalism in Iraq signifies a ‘passing of thresholds’ in Iraqi politics. This raises a serious question, notably: How will Kurdish leaders respond to the ideological challenges associated with pursuing an independence agenda in Northern Iraq? How will they respond to ideological changes initiated from within the private domain of society in Iraqi Kurdistan? Considering the future effect on Kurdish nationalist ambitions:

⁵² Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*, p. 35.

...does the fact that throughout Iraq's modern history, several powerful and prominent Kurdish tribes and leaders (including both Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani) have sought alliance with the Iraqi government, thereby weakening the Kurdish nationalist movement, mean that this will happen in the future when difficult choices perhaps have to be made? Or has the *de facto* state in Kurdistan now become so institutionalised within Kurdish political culture that it is now a permanent feature of the political map, and both Talabani and Barzani now have to factor this change into their policies and strategies?⁵³

Stansfield's appraisal of the political challenges facing the Kurdish elite is of interest for our discussion of ideology insofar as he crystallises how powerful members of the Kurdish elite have pursued agendas which were potentially detrimental to Kurdish nationalist ambition. If repeated, such actions may also create further ideological rifts which could not only result in the destabilisation or collapse of civic apparatus in the pseudo-state, but the re-fragmentation of the ideological apparatus of Kurdish society at the private level. The danger inherent in the Kurdish leadership placing *personal* interest above *national* interest (in the context of an unrecognised Kurdish state) is that it undermines the operation of ideological state apparatus in the *public* domain. There is no way of predicting what the future holds in terms of political stability within Iraqi Kurdistan, but it is safe to say that any future weakening of Kurdish nationalism at the hands of tribal or familial self-interest contains the potential to derail the dream of an independent Kurdistan – regardless of how institutionalised and entrenched the Kurdish unrecognised entity appears to be within the Iraqi political landscape.

The Empty Gesture

Althusser's expression of how ideology is shaped and formed in a complex interplay between the coercive and the non-coercive, the private and the public domains, dovetails perfectly with Žižek's commentary on 'the external ritual which materializes ideology',⁵⁴ – a ritual which is exemplified in the case of unrecognised states by what Žižek describes as 'the *empty* gesture.'⁵⁵ Before attempting to explain Žižek's concept, it is worth revisiting one of the central paradoxes visible in the behaviour of unrecognised entities (including Iraqi Kurdistan) in the international system. Having established that mainstream international relations discourse seeks to cast the *de facto* state (as one of a

⁵³ Stansfield, *Iraq*, pp. 202-3

⁵⁴ Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, p. 5

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36, (Emphasis Added)

number of ways in which unrecognised entities are conceptualised) in terms which connote a strategic desperation to attain sovereignty and legitimacy by any means necessary, be it through mimesis and ideological reproduction, or by achieving prerequisite standards and status, we are still confronted by a number of contradictory empirical facts. These facts undermine the centrality of the thesis proposed during the 1990s that the unrecognised state is perpetually pursuant of statehood regardless of how illegitimate it is. Such narratives perpetuate the image of international society as a hierarchy of states, with sovereign states at the apex of the pyramid of legitimacy followed by failed / quasi- states and at the bottom unrecognised entities and aberrations of the logic of statehood. This stratification of international order reveals the internalisation of the 'end of history'⁵⁶ thesis within international relations and the perpetuation of an image of international order which defines the place of unrecognised entities with extreme asymmetry. Besides their problematic conceptual parameters, the unfortunate effect of such discourses is that they ratify the production of simplified theoretical stereotypes of international society for normative ends, somewhat similar to categorising states in the image of the three Marx Brothers - with ambiguous and unrecognised state-like entities taking on the metaphoric form of Harpo's imbecilic silent presence in the pecking order.

However, the search for legitimacy and sovereignty may only be one of many tactical devices employed by unrecognised entities and to assume that the attainment of either option forms a singular existential pursuit is fundamentally misguided. If we look at Iraqi Kurdistan, for example, there is the creation of technical systems of government without the overt secessionist agenda of proclaiming an independent Kurdish state with sovereignty over itself and legal recognition in the international system. Kurdish statesmen exercise profound self-censorship on the issue of Kurdish separatism in Iraq, to the extent that there is nearly no projection of such an agenda at the international level. In ideological terms, a great deal of impetus and support for an independent Kurdish homeland comes from Kurdish nationalists outside the region, but the powerbrokers of the Kurdish cause inside Iraq remain remarkably silent on the issue of secession from the state of Iraq itself. At a similar level we can ask the question whether there is now a need

⁵⁶ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the last man* (New York: Perennial, 2002).

for South Ossetia to pursue the prerequisite standards necessary for international legitimacy and recognition following Russia's show of strength against Georgia and her *de jure* support for the ethno-political absorption of allies in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Likewise, can we assume that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) requires diplomatic recognition from sovereign powers other than Turkey given that Turkey is a geopolitical and military guarantor of the unrecognised entity's continued existence? What these examples (and many others) have in common is they illustrate how the assumption that unrecognised entities strive for legal recognition by any and all means is not only misguided, but also indicative of poor pedagogy. Clearly there are many situations in which legal recognition and independence could be disadvantageous and highly destabilising from a tactical perspective, the inference here being that such agendas are not being pursued by all unrecognised entities as their survival strategies may in fact be rooted in remaining illegitimate and ambiguous so as to exploit fissures in international geopolitics between and amongst sovereign entities. This brings our discussion on to how unrecognised entities maintain and perpetuate their illegitimacy at the tactical level, and how attempts at conforming to international standards and norms may signify the use of *empty gestures* in attaining wider strategic aims.

The 'empty gesture', as described by Žižek, anchors our understanding of the dialectic surrounding unrecognised entities such as Iraqi Kurdistan which, on the one hand, purports the seeking of legitimacy and recognition at the rhetorical level whilst, on the other hand, avoids direct engagement with the very same activity at the level of action. It points out how the legitimacy vs. illegitimacy dichotomy that we often expect to be hallmark of an unrecognised entity is potentially a conscious and tactical subversion of international norms and procedures. This statement implies that unrecognised entities possess the capacity to invoke the authorisation of their own functional existence within frameworks set-out by the club of sovereign states and the international institutions created to oversee the maintenance of international structures and norms. This gives the impression that the unrecognised entity seeks some form of rehabilitation with international society whilst at the same time providing a positive foil against political forces detrimental to the autonomy enjoyed by interest groups within the unrecognised entities' territorial delineations. The fundamental significance of this is that it allows for

the maintenance and perpetuation of an autonomous dynamic within a specific territorial area which could cease to exist if *actual* legal recognition was attained by the unrecognised entity.

The maintenance of a situation whereby sovereignty is always sought but never attained provides internal and external actors with the political (and ethno-political) cover to maintain an autonomous enclave within a sovereign state over the long-term by remaining one step short of *actual* or *physical* secession. In this way the actual or material reason for conflict is mitigated by the ambiguous territorial status of the unrecognised entity. It can be argued that by remaining illegitimate and non-sovereign, a pseudo-state can be created and maintained inside or among sovereign states without the potentially disastrous consequences associated with proclaiming independence from an existing legal sovereignty. The *empty gesture* of pursuing statehood is, therefore, one possible tactical device which can often empower interest groups who seek to maintain and perpetuate long-term control over a defined territorial area in a range of politically volatile scenarios. Such gestures also open the way, or create the premise, for a proximate territorial ally, advocate, or guarantor to exert political influence across transnational boundaries in a way which would not otherwise be possible.

The threatening unpredictability of exactly what will issue from Kurdish nationalism organising around a symbolically independent Kurdistan in northern Iraq likely accounts for the current lack of overt separatist projection by the KRG. Yet the nationalist impulse is not undermined by official ambivalence regarding the different ways in which the impulse may develop, and consequently the rhetoric of statecraft remains in place due to its ideological significance and utility. At the official level this provides a backdrop onto which the *empty gesture* associated with the pursuit of legitimacy is superimposed and also reveals how the gesture's utility lies outside simple questions of ethno-nationalism. Such gestures have a far more pragmatic utility for the continued existence of what remain illegitimate entities. Žižek frames the *empty gesture* in terms of choosing, or actively seeking, the impossible for the purposes of 'symbolic exchange'. He describes this paradox as:

[The] paradox of willing (choosing freely) what is in any case necessary, of pretending (maintaining the appearance) that there is a free choice although in fact there isn't, is strictly co-dependent with the notion of an empty symbolic gesture, a

gesture – an offer – which is meant to be rejected: what the empty gesture offers is the opportunity to choose the impossible, that which inevitably will not happen... The need for the phantasmic support of the public symbolic order (materialized in the so-called unwritten rules) thus bears witness to the system's vulnerability: the system is compelled to allow for possibilities of choices which must never actually take place, since their occurrence would cause the system to disintegrate, and the function of the unwritten rules is precisely to prevent the actualization of these choices formally allowed by the system.⁵⁷

Žižek gives examples of *empty gestures* and unwritten rules in operation by examining and critiquing everyday social mores and interpersonal relationships in Stalin's Russia. However we can adapt his critique to illustrate how unrecognised entities also utilise a similar array of ideological tools to fashion their presence in the symbolic order *of* states and *within* states.

The pursuit of legitimacy and the symbolic gestures (or symbolic exchange) inherent in such a pursuit may be offers to international society (from unrecognised entities) which are specifically intended to be rejected in line with the 'unwritten rules' of statecraft. The *empty gesture* of seeking to become a legally recognised sovereign state lies in the fact that such recognition is often impossibly unrealistic in a particular geopolitical reality – its inevitability is that it will not happen and may not even be intended to happen. In line with Žižek's argument, the 'phantasmic support of the public symbolic order' transforms into the notion of the unrecognised entity seeking qualitative recognition in the symbolic frameworks of international order (an order which is arguably 'symbolic' in terms of function) as a result of the system being compelled to accommodate the *possibility* of an unrecognised entity becoming a sovereign state, even if such an outcome may never actually take place. Unrecognised entities are, therefore, maintained and sustained by these 'unwritten rules' of international order which allow for a perpetual state of illegitimacy to be maintained indefinitely.

This gap, or space, created to accommodate unrecognised states points to the existence of so-called 'unwritten rules' governing autonomy movements, as well as pointing to the tactical advantage of fielding empty gestures. However, once fielded such gestures become operational at the symbolic level and provide a disincentive for military or other such threats from metropolitan and parent states. Cathartic as it may seem, the

⁵⁷ Žižek, Op. Cit., pp. 36-7, (My Emphasis)

unrecognised entity may never intend to pursue full secession and legal sovereignty, but may opt instead for the adoption of the symbolic mores of either a proximate regional ally or a range of sympathetic international actors (as in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan). At the tactical level, gestures toward legitimacy, standards and status from unrecognised entities preclude belligerency from parent states (such as Iraq) who are often constrained by their own fragile geopolitical and diplomatic positions. In many cases, once the gesture has been fielded that the unrecognised entity no longer wants to be a criminalised badland and aspires to engage with international norms, any attempt to remove or suppress the autonomy movement by force or other means often invokes the spectre of 'ethnic cleansing' and other derivatives of ethno-political conflict. Thus the circle is complete and the advantages of making *empty gestures* toward international norms and standards reinforces the fundamental ethno-political autonomy which is often a far more important goal in regional politics than sovereignty and the physical attainment of an independent state. The Georgian government fell into exactly this trap in 2008 when, in its desire to prevent the territorial separation of South Ossetia, it ignored the symbolic prerogatives which already existed for Russia to intervene militarily (in her capacity as the South Ossetian government's proximate advocate). The *empty gesture* in this example lay in the fact that South Ossetia's existence as an unrecognised entity, and its case for independence, endured regardless of the fact that the actualisation of an independent South Ossetia was always rejected by international society (especially the United States). However, Russia ratified the ethno-political case upon which such an independence gesture was based under the aegis of giving recognition and diplomatic support to a Slavic ethno-linguistic and geopolitical affiliate. Thus the *casus belli* were already in place if the Georgian government threatened the continued autonomy of the South Ossetian unrecognised entity within its own borders.

Conclusion

Analysts often ignore or overlook the fact that illegitimacy (illegitimate claims to sovereignty) can be sustained almost indefinitely provided that fissures of ambiguity in international and regional geopolitics can be exploited tactically. The pursuit of the long-term maintenance of an unrecognised territorial entity becomes possible insofar as the

rules and norms of sovereignty and international order are often tolerant of such mutations and are capable of accommodating their presence. This challenges our most fundamental understanding of states as singular units of sovereignty in the international system. The implication here is that it is possible for the conceptual opposite to occur. States can fragment, unrecognised entities can emerge, conflicts can ‘freeze’, and it remains possible for prolonged and durable situations to unfold in which interest groups within a particular territory can securitize their own technically illegitimate agenda through a wide range of means. It can be argued that such securitization without sovereignty is a methodological technique of unrecognised entities in that legitimacy is not sought in order to justify the existence of a particular ethno-political or ethno-territorial claim or agenda. That interest groups within an unrecognised entity are capable of creating a scenario which leads international relations theorists to the conclusion that they are witnessing the creation of a ‘new’ state, or a state ‘in the making’, reinforces the argument that analysts may have been misled by the ideological rhetoric and tactics employed by unrecognised entities as they attempt to maintain a status-quo scenario – one which guarantees political survival in the short and medium term, and purchases time for the pursuit of longer-term strategic aims. We should, therefore, avoid presuming that unrecognised entities are some form of embryonic or primordial precursor to the sovereign state. If preoccupations with sovereignty and legitimacy are taken to their logical conclusion, then we arrive at the notion of the *de facto* state striving for legitimacy to be bestowed in a top-down manner, or waiting for international society to engage with them and deliver them from their Manichaeian struggle between legitimacy and illegitimacy.

Such images are fictive in that they presume that unrecognised entities are part of the conventional wisdom of statecraft. The major success of many unrecognised entities is that they have mastered the rhetoric of geopolitics and international norms, and have exploited enmities between and within sovereign states over the long term. They have also exploited a weakness residing at the very core of the concept of sovereignty - that in the international system sovereignty is not a singular, universal, or normative concept, but rather one which has myriad forms and can be refigured and adapted in an

evolutionary sense over time.⁵⁸ The creation of a state, however, is a figurative mission glimpsed so furtively in many unrecognised entities that one begins to wonder whether such ambitions are the primary motivations of governments and populations who already experience the same level of autonomy as that often bestowed by formal legal sovereignty. The central theoretical challenge lies in the disarticulation of the unrecognised entity from the concept of the 'State' in both its sovereign and illegitimate manifestations. If we look closely at the conflicts and political situations that have led to the creation and maintenance of unrecognised entities without assuming the presence of state creation, it is possible that we will come closer to understanding how territories and regions can be maintained without sovereign, legal recognition over the long-term, and in what political situations such an outcome is likely to occur, endure, or fail.

⁵⁸ For an in-depth historical analysis of sovereignty in international relations, and a critical approach to the many misunderstandings surrounding the concept, see Stephen D. Krasner, 'Abiding Sovereignty,' *International Political Science Review*, 22:3, 2001, pp. 229-251.

5. Economic Liberalisation in Iraqi Kurdistan

As stated within the introduction to this study, the motivational role played by economics, and the impact this role has on political decision-making, represents a significant gap in political science analysis of separatism and the formation of secessionist aspiration in the context of unrecognised entities. The significance of Iraqi Kurdistan emerging as a new trade entrepôt within the wider political economy of the Middle East remains largely unexamined. The emergence of a political economy of marketisation within Iraqi Kurdistan raises some important questions which enhance our understanding of the theoretical issues discussed in the preceding chapters. In the case of Iraqi Kurdistan we do not yet know how current models of liberal economic strategy will eventually position the region internationally, in relation to the many political and economic issues currently challenging Iraq, or whether the Kurdish economic experiment is reshaping Kurdish civic nationalism and fuelling an ideological desire for secession among Kurds regionally and in the international Kurdish diaspora.

Another consideration is whether or not the strategies of the Kurdish political elite represent an economic logic ideally suited to their unrecognised enclave in Iraq, or whether the illegitimacy associated with having unrecognised status hampers current attempts at economic reform and instead condemns Iraqi Kurdistan to remaining a dependent territory of Iraq or, at its most bleak, something akin to a Kurdish *reservation*. This chapter engages with the political economy of Iraqi Kurdistan from a critical perspective which attempts to dissect and elucidate the relationship between the current economic autonomy harnessed by the KRG, and problems associated with implementing the free-market principle in the economic setting of an unrecognised entity. This chapter does not provide a quantitative survey of emerging markets or patterns of commerce and wealth distribution in the region, but instead posits questions regarding Kurdistan's economic development with a clear focus on the region's socio-political environment, and its current status as an unrecognised entity.

Some scholars remain ardently sceptical of the political economic significance and impact of *de facto* states and unrecognised entities like Iraqi Kurdistan. Scott Pegg argues:

The impact of de facto states on political economy is relatively modest. This can be explained by a combination of factors including their limited numbers, their generally small size, their often impoverished conditions due to the devastation of war, and their lack of juridical standing – which acts as a substantial deterrent to foreign investment and international economic integration. That qualification aside, however, these entities do affect the global political economy...in spite of their lack of juridical status, business is done with de facto states and similar such entities and this business may produce negative consequences.¹

Recent economic developments within Iraqi Kurdistan point to the fact that the regional government has attracted foreign investment with a level of success not normally associated with unrecognised entities, and symbolically the post-2003 consensus has promoted the view that Iraqi Kurdistan is very much open for business.² The chapter which follows is a response to a dilemma of sovereignty which has been identified as grounded in political economy. As argued by Naeem Inayatullah, sovereignty is challenged by the expansion of the capitalist division of labour and demands that ‘territorial states pursue projects that construct their identities as states as well as their differences with other states. Such projects of expression require wealth. In capitalism, wealth is the product of a global division of labor and, therefore, discussions of sovereignty obligate an understanding of a wealth-producing division of labor.’³ This chapter highlights the crucial dual relationship between political economy and the lack of sovereignty experienced by unrecognised entities. Iraqi Kurdistan’s economic development since 1991 is selected as the primary framework of the study in order to examine the medium and long-term implications of developing capitalist divisions of labour and principles of marketisation within territorial enclaves that lack *de jure* sovereignty. The chapter also addresses questions relating to the sustainability of free-trade mechanisms in such an environment.

¹ Pegg, ‘De Facto States in the International System,’ Institute of International Relations – University of British Columbia, Working Paper No. 21, 1998, p. 3

² The climate of optimism which surrounds economic development and regeneration in Iraqi Kurdistan is best illustrated by an official publication by the Kurdistan Regional Government entitled *The Kurdistan Region: Invest in the Future* (Washington: Newsdesk Media, 2007) in which the unrecognised entity in Iraqi Kurdistan is unambiguously portrayed as an attractive investment opportunity and a trade zone of great potential. As a marketing exercise this document is absolutely unique in so far as it represents how an unrecognised entity can promote ambiguous status as an economic benefit for the purposes of generating foreign capital inflows.

³ Naeem Inayatullah, ‘Beyond the sovereignty dilemma: quasi-states as a social construct’, in J. Biersteker & Weber (eds.) *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 51.

Economic Liberalisation in Historical Context

Tim Niblock puts forward two generalisations which attempt to account for why liberalisation is pursued by underdeveloped countries. Firstly, that there exists an international dimension which motivates underdeveloped countries to look toward the integrative qualities of international capitalism, as opposed to suffering the difficulties associated with autonomous economic development; and secondly, the fact that the social structures of underdeveloped countries contain in-built tendencies toward the transitional, so that the reformist state gradually transforms into a bourgeois-bureaucratic state whose interests lie in liberalising the economy and creating opportunities for investment⁴. Niblock explains that the two are not mutually exclusive, and this point is corroborated by the KRG's desire to make best use of international expertise and the fact that the KRG's bureaucracy concentrates much of its efforts on the accumulation of funds and seeking inward investment. However, the potentially negative consequences of economic liberalisation and its effect on the Kurdish unrecognised entity have not been analysed in sufficient depth. It is therefore necessary to look at the broader economic trajectory of the Kurdistan region in order to examine multiform issues of this nature.

As described in an article by Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński entitled *The Vicissitudes of the Market Principle*, the command economy in communist Poland, like the type once found in Iraq, was incompatible with democratic order and was, he writes 'often the strategy of choice'⁵ within an exclusively authoritarian political environment such as that which controlled Iraqi Kurdistan pre-1991. Although conceptually related to the Soviet-type systems which evolved in the former communist countries of central and eastern Europe, Iraq's Ba'athist command economy left many residual barriers – institutional, structural and psychological – within the Kurdish safe haven which required 'creative political and economic solutions' to overcome⁶. Such creativity is a key feature of economic planning in Iraqi Kurdistan. Although wide-ranging privatization was initiated in the late 1980s, Niblock describes Baghdad's attempts during this period as limited in terms of liberalizing the Iraqi economy, for the simple fact that 'liberalisation in Iraq

⁴ Niblock and Murphy (eds.), *Economic and Political Liberalisation in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1993), pp. 56-57

⁵ E. Wnuk-Lipiński, 'The Vicissitudes of the Market Principle,' *International Social Science Journal*, 140, 1994, p. 185.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 186.

since 1987... remained strictly within the limits that the government has seen fit to tolerate'⁷. It is unlikely that the effects of such measures were felt at all in the Kurdish north.

Iraq's command economy, therefore, remained firmly in place despite this peripheral and limited experimentation with the market principle. A critical problem now facing Iraq is that its recent shift toward a market economy is particularly challenging because the features that made Iraq function as a command economy are precisely the opposite of those needed for a market economy. Iraq as a command economy lacked any of the legal, regulatory, political, and economic institutions that form the basis of market economies⁸. This situation closely mirrors the social and political dilemma of those former communist countries in central and Eastern Europe who were faced with the task of making the transition to a market society after the demise of the command economies which dominated the former communist bloc⁹. For many of these independent states it was far from a smooth transition. Many of Wnuk-Lipiński's observations of the Polish experience during this period of economic dysfunction and experimentation are highly relevant for a comparative analysis of the current Kurdish predicament and will therefore form the critical framework of this chapter.

The economic situation inside Iraqi Kurdistan post-1991 was complicated by a lack of communication between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and agencies operating within the theatre of humanitarian assistance. The political coherence of the nascent Kurdish administration was also an aggravating factor during this period¹⁰. In addition, there was also a lack of coordination between NGO led projects in different regions of the northern safe haven. This led to a confused and incoherent situation whereby 'the presences of many NGOs, often with foreign funding, pose[d] the risk of creating a parallel government and undermining the elected administration'¹¹. In the event this did not manifest to the extent anticipated, but it served to illustrate just how institutionally and structurally vulnerable the region was (at that early period of

⁷ Niblock and Murphy (eds.), *Op. Cit.*, pp. 77-83.

⁸ See Bathsheba Crocker, 'Restructuring Iraq's Economy,' *The Washington Quarterly*, 27:4, 2004, pp. 73-93.

⁹ E. Wnuk-Lipiński, *Op. Cit.*, p. 186

¹⁰ A. De Boer and M. Leezenberg (eds.), *Iraqi Kurdistan: The Need for Durable Development* (Amsterdam: Netherlands Kurdistan Society, 1993), p. 5

¹¹ *Ibid.*

autonomy) to the influence of privatized non-governmental apparatus in the vacuum created by the destructive capacity of Saddam's command economy following the infamous *Anfal* campaigns of the 1980s. It should be emphasised that civic government was not sufficiently well developed in northern Iraq for Kurdish political parties to assume any form of national governance immediately following events in 1991.

In the divided world of Kurdish politics which emerged thereafter, the effect of sanctions, internal by the government of Iraq and external by the UN, had a deleterious impact on the economic development of the region and the quality of life experienced by its people; and this in turn made the task of forming an administrative apparatus all the more difficult¹². As pointed out by Stansfield, factional fighting between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) came to fill the vacuum left by the absence of Iraqi forces on the ground:

The economic situation of this period is most usefully seen as one of coming to terms with a unique set of conditions presented by the political environment. As well as coping with the impact of the *Anfal* campaigns and the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war, Iraqi Kurdistan was now under international and internal sanctions and isolated from the rest of the country. The internal political situation was unstable, with internecine fighting breaking out several times during this period, and ferocious fighting taking place between the KDP and PUK.¹³

Factional fighting between the KDP and PUK eventually subsided around 1997 and since then Iraqi Kurdistan has enjoyed a period of relative political stability accompanied by the slow regeneration of the economic and socio-economic infrastructure of the region. This relative stability has, however, been the result of a dual mechanism of self-rule by the KRG, the support of international relief agencies – the latter a persistent reminder of the refugee containment strategies of the 1990s – and the notorious influence of aid distributed under the United Nations Oil-For-Food Program¹⁴ (upon which the

¹² See Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003)

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 50

¹⁴ "On 14 April 1995, acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council adopted resolution 986, establishing the "oil-for-food" programme, providing Iraq with another opportunity to sell oil to finance the purchase of humanitarian goods, and various mandated United Nations activities concerning Iraq. The programme, as established by the Security Council, is intended to be a "temporary measure to provide for the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, until the fulfilment by Iraq of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including notably resolution 687 (1991) of 3 April 1991"; "In the initial stages of the programme, Iraq was permitted to sell \$2 billion worth of oil every six months, with

autonomous Kurdish administration later came to rely for its economic survival). The US led invasion of 2003, and the subsequent fall of the Ba'ath regime appear to have reinvigorated the commercial spirit of Iraq's Kurds and their leaders have pushed ahead with what is fast amounting to the most ambitious program of reconstruction and economic development that the region has witnessed in living memory.

To the casual observer it would appear that the market principle has been adopted as a form of state ideology by the KRG, promising to turn Kurdistan into a land of opportunity, free trade and deregulated commerce which, if it does not herald an ascent to the status of a regional trade-hub or entrepôt like Dubai; will certainly uphold Iraqi Kurdistan as an example to the rest of Iraq of what can be achieved through foreign direct investment, and the forward planning of liberalised economic development. That the Kurdistan Development Corporation's (KDC) slogan to entice inward investment from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member states is 'The Other Iraq'¹⁵ reveals, in an ominous yet futuristic context, not only the advantages of political liberalisation for Kurdish economic morale, but an ideological departure from the strictures of dependency economics and a move toward increased regional autonomy and commercial viability.

As Wnuk-Lipiński argues, '[the] market principle may be defined as one of the key driving forces feeding the dynamics of a society; not only in the economic sphere, but also in other domains of collective life...The market principle fulfils at least two basic functions, ideological and regulative'¹⁶. When we apply this conceptualization to a historical analysis of the dynamics which have affected the Kurds transition from

two-thirds of that amount to be used to meet Iraq's humanitarian needs. In 1998, the limit on the level of Iraqi oil exports under the programme was raised to \$5.26 billion every six months, again with two-thirds of the oil proceeds earmarked to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. In December 1999, the ceiling on Iraqi oil exports under the programme was removed by the Security Council. Seventy two per cent of Iraqi oil export proceeds funded the humanitarian programme, of which 59% was earmarked for the contracting of supplies and equipment by the Government of Iraq for the 15 central and southern governorates and 13% for the three northern governorates, where the United Nations implemented the programme on behalf of the Government of Iraq. The balance included 25% for a Compensation Fund for war reparation payments; 2.2% for United Nations administrative and operational costs; and 0.8% for the weapons inspection programme." Text from United Nations Office of the Iraq Programme / Oil-for-Food, website: <http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/background/index.html> (Accessed 18.05.2009).

¹⁵ See Kurdistan – The Other Iraq, <http://www.theotheriraq.com/>. (Accessed 19.05.2009).

¹⁶ E. Wnuk-Lipiński, Op. Cit., p. 185

agrarian and transhumant pastoralist modes of production to the current experimentation with free-market principles, we see that in recent historical periods collective life in Kurdistan was characterised by regional or geographic modes of trade and exchange rather than sedentarised subsistence. In terms of spatial geography, Kurdistan is conveniently located at the crossroads of trade between east and west whilst, in global terms, Kurdistan's strategic position has placed it at the centre of North-South and South-North trade since antiquity. The impact of state-centric restructuring, initiated after Iraq was removed from the Ottoman Porte by the British following the First World War, brought the Kurds into direct conflict with the forces of centralization. The newly fixed borders, and the problems associated with allegiance to the centre, not only imposed a new national status upon the Kurds, but threw them (particularly after the discovery of oil in Kurdistan in the 1920s) into a completely new economic paradigm – one of statist intent and *de jure* authority from British controlled Baghdad.

The impact of centralization, and Kurdish resistance to centralization, is a model feature of the turbulent historical relationship between Iraqi Kurds and the central state in Baghdad. It can also be argued that the authoritarian command economics pursued by Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party were the logical outcome of statism and centralization policies designed to ensure the economic viability and survival of what has historically been a fractious and divided country. The authority of the centre over the periphery became not only symbolic of the external character of Iraqi politics between 1958 and 2003, but crucially, it was symbolic of an internal dynamic which produced a culture of fear, terror, and repression for generations of Iraqis. If anything, the recent Kurdish move toward the market principle may represent a regression, or return to autonomous modes of production and market exchange which, although seemingly counterintuitive, are not perhaps as alien to the peoples of this region as may first appear. The ideological function of the market principle, as argued by Wnuk-Lipiński, can be observed no matter how different a societies' economic organization is in relation to others. In the case of Iraqi Kurdistan the market principle may be regulating the unrecognised economy of the region and legitimizing current formations of socio-political order. This inescapably brings into question whether the new political economy of Iraqi Kurdistan (arranged as it is around an amalgamation of oil revenue, external

assistance and neo-liberal market experimentation) is merely a vehicle for elite interests and the institutionalization of revenue streams closely linked to networks of patronage; or whether it is in fact economic development in the interest of the rank-and-file population of the Kurdistan region (as opposed to development 'on the fly').

This question becomes increasingly important given the contribution being made by the private sector and the KRG's evident willingness to embrace privatization. By opening up Kurdistan to the forces of privatization and foreign direct investment, the regional government is ensuring that knowledge, technology and expertise is now reaching an area that has for decades been denied access to even the most rudimentary services and technological expertise. In their pursuit of inward investment and cooperation with the private sector, the regional government is potentially able to bring international expertise to bear on the development of essential services (water, electricity, healthcare, education, logistics, transport, construction, and engineering) and conduct projects that, if left to the meagre technological capabilities available to the Kurds without external assistance, could create serious problems for the management of resources and delivery of services, as well as posing safety and environmental hazards.

By engaging with international and multinational actors, the KRG has, in theory, adopted a free-market strategy for the development of Iraqi Kurdistan's industrial infrastructure and this may, over the course of time, flow into regeneration of the agricultural sector of Kurdistan's economy. However, there are problems associated with leaving development to the private sector and market principles alone. Private companies will be looking to maximize profit, therefore it follows that Iraqi Kurdistan will have to ensure it is an attractive, safe, and profitable investment opportunity in both the long and short term. The ever present problem of regional instability is likely to provide obstacles to foreign direct investment, as are the diplomatic complexities of investing and operating inside a Kurdish unrecognised entity whose relations with the governments of Iraq and Turkey are often nebulous and problematic. These variables will inevitably form part of the risk profile associated with investing in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. A further concern with regard to reliance on the private sector is that if crucial services become privatized, that in itself creates the potential for an inhibition of competition within Kurdistan. Thus, market expansion and economic growth may become artificially constricted unless the

regional government implements careful regulatory mechanisms for the activities of private companies inside Kurdistan. At the time of writing, the health of global financial systems and mechanisms is being called into question amid concerns of widespread global recession and the knock-on effect of instability in the world's financial markets. This creates a very uncertain picture of future economic growth and reconstruction in Iraqi Kurdistan as well as the KRG's ability to deliver more than rhetoric to a regional population who have been promised so much. A great deal depends on how well placed the KRG are to ride the transformations which develop in the regional and global economies and markets over the coming decades.

It is highly feasible that global political and economic trends (in the present) characterize and influence the operation of both micro and macro level political and economic institutions in the current period: the focus of this analysis being the articulation of this relationship within the 'new' political economy of Iraqi Kurdistan. Therefore, the development of viable economic institutions will be crucial in order for the KRG to consolidate a meaningful program of civic governance across the region. A theoretical framework proposed by Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) considers how economic institutions in the present have, on the one hand, a direct impact on economic performance and, on the other hand, a direct impact on the distribution of resources in the present. This model highlights two key problems for the KRG in that both economic performance and the distribution of resources remain relatively obscure in the context of Kurdistan as an unrecognised entity. Acemoglu and Robinson argue:

Economic institutions matter for economic growth because they shape the incentives of key actors in society. In particular, they influence investments in physical and human capital and technology, and the organization of production. Although cultural and geographical factors may also matter for economic performance, differences in economic institutions are the major source of cross-country differences in economic growth and prosperity.¹⁷

Iraqi Kurdistan faces the huge challenge of developing economic institutions of the calibre necessary to overcome the stigma of illegitimacy which accompanies the unrecognised status it currently experiences.

¹⁷ D. Acemoglu and J. A. Robinson, 'Paths of Economic and Political Development,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, B. R. Weingast and D. A. Wittman (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 264

The relationship between a lack of juridical status and the creation of political and economic institutions highlights one of the major problems in analyzing the political economy of unrecognised entities. In nearly every case, this lack of legal status is a factor which inhibits economic equilibrium due to how political power within these entities often emerges from, and is reinforced by, conflicts of interest over the distribution of economic resources. Equally important is the problem that it is often not easy to draw either an economic or a spatial boundary between the unrecognised entity and its differentiated metropolitan frame (in this case the modern Iraqi state). Dov Lynch argues that, in the case of Eurasian *de facto* states, international society should agree on an economic framework that helps to break down the criminalized political economies of *de facto* states to bring an end to their economic isolation. Lynch proposes a multidimensional approach to the problem which does not rely on economic cooperation between *de facto* states and the metropolitan states from which they seek independence; but instead involves assistance from international financial institutions to the metropolitan states, some of which should be earmarked for the *de facto* state. Extremely important for our analysis of relations between the KRG and the government of Iraq is Lynch's proposal that the metropolitan state should nobly allow the *de facto* state to develop privatized relations with other states, emulating the Taiwanese model¹⁸. On the part of the unrecognised entity however, this can only be achieved through the development of viable economic institutions, not before.

Following the previously discussed framework created by Acemoglu and Robinson, we may ask the question of how, exactly, are equilibrium economic institutions to be determined and constructed within Iraqi Kurdistan as it strives to implement a methodology of economic liberalisation? Implicit in any answer will be the fact that political power in the present inevitably determines the efficacy of domestic economic institutions in the present, and the political economy of Iraqi Kurdistan clearly symbolises this highly nuanced inter-relatedness. This functional inter-relatedness is further complicated by a notable distinction between *de jure* (institutional) and *de facto*

¹⁸ Dov Lynch, *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States* (Washington DC: United States Institute for Peace, 2004), p. 131

(in its purest socio-economic / regional / informal sense) political power¹⁹. This bipolarity of political power is clearly identifiable within Iraqi Kurdistan as the visible contradiction exists between the *de jure* political authority of the KRG and the *de facto* authority of the KDP/PUK axis, local / regional actors, and patronage networks throughout the political landscape in northern Iraq. This contradiction stems from the problem that Iraqi Kurdistan remains a perennial patchwork of regional and provincial interest groupings under the *de jure* umbrella of the KRG, despite efforts to the contrary. Acemoglu and Robinson also argue that the distribution of resources in the present translates into *de facto* political power in the present, and the *de facto* power of a group depends on its economic resources²⁰. The main thrust of this analytical thread may, therefore, be summarized as follows: that the contradictions between *de jure* and *de facto* political power within Iraqi Kurdistan reveal that it is economic interdependency and the distribution of resources which currently determines political relations between groups inside Iraqi Kurdistan and, on a macro policy level, relations between the Kurdistan region and the rest of Iraq. These points are often understated in analysis of the relationship between Iraqi Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq – a situation in which the distribution of resources (financial, economic, security, and natural) forms a major topic of negotiation between the respective actors and parties.

Iraqi Kurdistan's current attempt at economic liberalization and transition to a market society may, in this context, be representative of the unrecognised entities' attempt at engaging in privatized relations with other states and wider international society. The KRG appears to be attempting to operate bespoke economic systems as a means of achieving a maximal level of economic independence for the Kurdistan region as well as formal international recognition of the region's economic autonomy. Such a strategy may, over time, exacerbate a wide range of tensions and ongoing disputes both inside the Kurdistan region and Iraq as a whole. A great deal depends on which ethno-political or ethno-national cutting edges are deployed by Kurdistan's political groups in response to political developments in Iraq as a whole²¹, as well as the extent to which

¹⁹ See Acemoglu and Robinson, 'Paths of Economic and Political Development,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, B. R. Weingast and D. A. Wittman (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 676

²¹ See J. Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics* (Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 1-5

Kurdish political decision-makers in the north can retain political coherence and unity in the face of a rehabilitated Iraqi state emboldened by post-conflict settlements and stabilisation efforts.

Kurdistan's political economy is now characterized by both relative political stability and the coalescing of once disparate political factions around an economic program which contains, at its heart, the utilization and application of the market principle in one of the world's poorest and most systematically underdeveloped regions. As described by Leezenberg, the KDP and the PUK have returned to their prior role as economic middlemen to supervise this elaborate project²² and naturally the spectre of corruption and maldevelopment is never far from this debate. The resort to neo-liberal market economics, however, may not ensure a safe, stable or democratic future for Iraq's Kurds. Przeworski argues that democracy always survives when a society is sufficiently wealthy, and what really matters in poor countries is not the rate of growth per se but the impact of economic crises on per capita incomes. He takes this model further and argues that 'democracy can survive in poor countries but only under special conditions, namely, when the distribution of income is very egalitarian or when neither the rich nor the poor have the capacity to overthrow it'²³. In a historical context, egalitarian governance inside Iraqi Kurdistan has been extremely limited in the post-Ba'athist era, and the notion of fundamental civil and economic liberties is being sorely tested by the cumulative effect of those political, social and economic disasters Iraq has experienced since the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, the genocidal *Anfal* campaigns which ran parallel, sanctions, and predatory activity by elite actors within Kurdish politics itself.

The relative autonomy, and indigenous capacity experienced by the Kurds after 1991 allowed for radical economic change to be considered. This process was accelerated by the presence of the UN and NGOs within northern Iraq's protected territory. In turn, the economy of aid and humanitarian assistance effectively dismantled, or neutralized the administrative legacy of the *status quo ante*, paving the way for the implementation of the market principle to be considered within a relatively short space of

²² M. Leezenberg, 'Urbanisation, Privatisation, and Patronage: The Political economy of Iraqi Kurdistan,' in *The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics*, F. A. Jabar and H. Dawod (eds.), (London: Saqi Books, 2006), p. 174

²³ A. Przeworski, 'Self-Enforcing Democracy,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, B. R. Weingast and D. A. Wittman (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 318-319

time. It therefore appears that between 1998 and 2003 the Kurds, finding themselves in an institutional and administrative vacuum with limited choice, viewed pursuit of the market principle as an economic strategy which could offer Kurdistan a number of development advantages. As argued by Wnuk-Lipiński, the replacement of the administrative remnants of a command economy is easier after dismantling the authoritarian system and establishing a democratic political order. The economic and political strategies of the KRG appear to incorporate this logic. Similarly, Przeworsky argues that in the context of the post-communist Polish experience:

...radical programs are more likely to advance further under democratic conditions even if voters would have preferred to start with a more gradual strategy. Hence, if politicians are concerned about the progress of reforms, they have an incentive to impose a radical strategy even against popular references and even when they know that this strategy will have to be moderated under popular pressure.²⁴

It follows then that some form of, or attempt at political democratization and liberalization was necessary in Iraqi Kurdistan before the KRG could pursue any radical reform agenda aimed at injecting the market principle into the regional economy. Stansfield argues that the currently divided system 'has shown itself to be reasonably successful at maintaining some semblance of peace and stability in a region more used to violence and political instability'²⁵, therefore, in this unusual paradigm of pragmatic unification for the sake of economic benefit, the Kurds have achieved a level of political polycentrism and stability which has created the necessary political space for their current experiment in economic liberalism.

Entrenched political actors in Kurdistan are, perhaps, constrained by the very institutions of governance that they have created (or attempted to create), and this may be identified as a subtle by-product of elite level competition²⁶. It has been argued that representative elite competition is one key to the successful introduction of both market reform and democracy due to the elites mutually holding each other in check and generating incentives to appeal to broader constituencies²⁷. Although there is

²⁴ A. Przeworski, 'Political Dynamics of Economic Reforms: East and South,' cited in E. Wnuk-Lipiński, 'The Vicissitudes of the Market Principle,' *International Social Science Journal*, 140, 1994, pp. 28-29

²⁵ Stansfield, *Op. Cit.*, p. 176

²⁶ See A. Gryzmala-Busse and P. Jones Luong, 'Democratization: Post-Communist Implications,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, B. R. Weingast & D. A. Wittman (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

considerable fragmentation among elites and constituencies in Iraqi Kurdistan, the threat of replacement and elite turnover is extraordinarily low and this has enabled cooperation and mutual checks to institutionalize despite deep-seated ideological differences between political factions within the KRG.

Wnuk-Lipiński identifies three barriers which will confront the application of the market principle in the wake of a command economy. He argues that when applied in its 'strict', neo-liberal version, the market principle must overcome (1) institutional; (2) structural; and (3) psychological barriers which can divide the political scene into roughly two camps: (1) those who support neo-liberal understanding of the market principle and (2) those, who believe that a market principle implemented in a post-communist (or in this case post-Ba'athist) environment must be limited by state intervention in order to equalize the burdens of economic transformation²⁸. It has yet to be seen how these conflicting perspectives may be replicated in the Kurdish political environment, however, it is clear that many within the KRG understand that adherence to the market principle may be the best way to capitalize on United Nations Security Council Resolution 986 (UNSCR 986) which had an immense impact on the development of the current Kurdish administration²⁹ and its ability to transcend the legacy left by sanctions and Saddam's command economics.

There will, however, be those on all sides of the KRG's political spectrum who question the government's ability to anticipate and plan for the as yet unseen burdens and pitfalls of free-market transformation in Kurdistan. The Government of Iraq's former command economy left little or no industrial infrastructure behind in Kurdistan and the agricultural sector of Iraqi Kurdistan's economy remains decimated by the depopulation of rural areas and the wholesale destruction of villages, towns and smallholdings which had once serviced an agrarian economic base. The Government of Iraq, unlike comparable socialist regimes, left no industrial giants for the Kurds to inherit other than an ostensibly ill-managed oil infrastructure. One can therefore posit the idea that the market principle is possibly the most appealing option for the transformation of the Kurdistan region given the current state of industrial underdevelopment in the region. By

²⁸ E. Wnuk-Lipiński, *Op. Cit.*, p. 186

²⁹ See Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy*, 2003

adopting this approach, the KRG reveal their optimistic political vision of turning the Kurdistan region into ‘the other Iraq’, with a distinct political economy of free trade, and a seat at the table of global economic markets.

Socio-Economic Constraints

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union analysts have highlighted the constraints inherent in any transition from command societies to market societies. Wnuk-Lipiński points out that many peculiarities can arise from such a transition, particularly the phenomenon of ‘antinomy’ which he describes as ‘efficiency versus justice in the context of social inequalities’³⁰. It is to this point that we shall now turn. It has been said that the historical plight of the Iraqi Kurds provides us with a constant reminder of the artificiality of the Iraqi state and those structural weaknesses that have haunted it since its formation³¹. To this extent, years of neglect and repression effectively kept Iraqi Kurds caged within the vicissitudes of command economies administered by several Arab nationalist regimes. Once relative autonomy and independent administration had taken root following the 1991 Gulf war, a key open question would have been which strategy was most appropriate for accomplishing the economic reconstruction of this shattered region.

Reliance on agriculture was perhaps never an option due to the fact that development based on the free-trade of agricultural products would bestow no comparative advantage compared with industrialization, inward investment and liberalization of goods, services and prices. As argued by Rune Skarstein, ‘empirical evidence indicates that poor countries do not have a comparative advantage in agricultural goods, and that they have an absolute disadvantage in the trade of agricultural as well as industrial goods. Further liberalization of trade in agricultural goods will therefore harm rather than help the poorest countries’³². Skarstein’s analysis recognizes that industrial goods and services have higher income elasticity of demand than agricultural goods, therefore making the development of an industrial base *over*

³⁰ E. Wnuk-Lipiński, Op. Cit., p. 186

³¹ Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 155

³² Rune Skarstein, ‘Free Trade: A Dead End for Underdeveloped Economies,’ *Review of Political Economy*, 19:3, 2007, pp. 347-367, (Abstract)

agriculture a far more attractive proposition for underdeveloped countries. It follows that international institutions responsible for global trade and development such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), The World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have favoured free trade as a vehicle for economic development in so-called developing countries; and this rationale has now arrived in unrecognised political enclaves such as Kurdistan³³. The reality is that the attainment of higher economic growth is somewhat premised on long-term technical change and industrialization, often at the expense of the agricultural sector and its workforce. Because of this, the transition to a market society may, in both the long and short term, create new social and political problems for Iraqi Kurdistan.

Problems which may arise in Kurdistan's transition to a market society include: (1) preference for short-term over long-term interests; (2) the emergence of monopolies (and oligopolies); (3) the production and reproduction of social inequalities; (4) inability to satisfy certain types of demands (law and order, mass education, fundamental research, etc.); and crucially, (5) the dominance of 'particular interest' over the 'common interest'³⁴ - especially with regard to the political influence of the private sector. Another problem is the final version of the Kurdish market society which emerges. Democratization and political liberalisation may not have sufficiently advanced to a point where the benefits of the market principle will be seen by all Kurds. Therefore the Kurdish administration runs the risk of creating an economic system that will, over time, run contrary to the interests of the majority of Iraqi Kurds who are still relatively unfamiliar with the requirements of a market economy. Under this new economic rationale, potential for the systematization of patronage and corruption in Kurdistan is seemingly boundless. Equally, more freedom and choice in public life may, in the long-term, undermine the temporal identity of the KDP / PUK axis, and the main axiom of this *entente cordiale* amongst rank-and-file Kurds³⁵. Other social and political pressures may also manifest due to the practical application of market principles, as Offe suggests:

...property must be privatized, prices must be liberalized, or 'marketised', and the state budget is to be stabilized in order to relieve strong inflationary pressures....but

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ E. Wnuk-Lipiński, Op. Cit., p. 189

³⁵ Ibid.

stabilization, if strictly pursued, does not economize on cost, but leads to *increases* of costs of a special kind, namely 'transition' costs (e.g. the social costs of the closing down of unprofitable enterprises, or of cuts in social expenditures), thus generating political resistance to marketisation and privatization.³⁶

It is, therefore, likely that if the market principle is pursued too forcefully in Kurdistan, serious political resistance, instability and antinomy may evolve in the long run as a response to ever growing socio-economic and socio-political dysfunction. If we return to the concept of 'psychological' barriers, Wnuk-Lipiński argues that as soon as the general model of economic transition has passed from the realm of discourse to the realm of practical implementation, radical market-orientated reform will face constraints which can be seen as legacies of the former command system³⁷. These constraints may be legacies of a transitional 'non-system' (as experienced by Iraqi Kurds between 1991 and 2003), an institutional vacuum, blurred social (and political) identities amongst the people, fluctuating rules of economic life, and extraordinary levels of uncertainty³⁸.

The KRG must also take further risks insofar as their strategy for the creation of a market society must be delivered in a top-down manner into an institutional vacuum left by the departure of the Ba'ath regime's command economy in 1991. Even though the command economy generated under Saddam was replaced by a sanctions regime, historically the destruction of infrastructure within parts of northern Iraq largely populated by Kurds was, in itself, a form of economic warfare which required its own institutional logic and rationale. The institutional infrastructure created by the Kurds since 1991 may be insufficient for the type of spontaneous marketisation being initiated and this may, over time, lead to maldevelopment of the Kurdistan region. Ironically, once such a reality starts to manifest, the KRG may find that it must resort to *étatist* methods of market regulation within its own territory. This again raises the spectre of future political conflict. Further still, Wnuk-Lipiński raises the issue that group interest creates a paradox when the transition to a market society takes effect. Iraqi Kurdistan is a palimpsest of group interest ranging from the political parties, ministries and departments

³⁶ C. Offe, 'The Politics of Social Policy in East European Transitions: Antecedents, Agents, and Agenda of Reforms,' Bremen: Zentrum für Sozialpolitik, *Mimeo* (1992), cited in E. Wnuk-Lipiński, 'The Vicissitudes of the market principle', *International Social Science Journal*, 140, 1994, pp. 185-200

³⁷ E. Wnuk-Lipiński, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 185-90

³⁸ *Ibid.*

within the KRG to notables (Aghas and the Sheikhly class), strongmen, private militias, black-marketeers, Islamists, religious establishments, armed factions and so on. The following issues, therefore, become increasingly evident:

The protection of such group interests slows down economic transformation and prolongs...economic crisis. On the other hand, ignoring these group interests increases social resistance to change, which in turn, also brings about a slow-down of economic transformation and the increase of the popularity of radical populist parties. This very phenomenon is also an underlying cause of two other serious contradictions. The first one is between the social and economic sphere which may be expressed in the following way: *the structure formation function of a market economy vs. an old étatist structure.*³⁹

This is a very important conceptualization for it presents us with the realization that in the context of Kurdistan we have not only the remains of the 'old étatist structure' in close spatial proximity to the Kurdish neo-state, but also the endurance of traditional societal structures which transcend Iraqi Kurdistan's territorial boundaries.

If we follow Wnuk-Lipiński's argument, the Kurds, in order to build a stable base for economic growth, would have to 'suspend' traditional group interests for the sake of a better future, a more efficient economy, and more civic freedom⁴⁰. Something rarely considered in any analysis of the current economic transformation of Iraqi Kurdistan is how the introduction of market rules may bring about what Wnuk-Lipiński terms the 'well-known Weberian mechanism of economic class and middle class formation'⁴¹. However, this process takes considerable time to take effect and the formation of a new Kurdish middle class and nouveau riche is still in the making. Nonetheless, in the case of Kurdistan, when support for transformation based on rejection of the *status quo ante* expires, further transformation loses the necessary social base and can hardly sustain forward momentum within the logic of democratic principles⁴². The result of this is limited politically led expansion and competition – two key driving forces for any market economy.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 190. Emphasis added.

⁴⁰ E. Wnuk-Lipiński, Op. Cit., p.191

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴²E. Wnuk-Lipiński, Op. Cit.

The Poison Chalice of Marketisation

A considerable socio-economic hurdle for Iraqi Kurdistan will be a problem which faced some former communist countries in the wake of the Soviet Union's dissolution. This hurdle is signified by the fact that many of Kurdistan's population, outside the bureaucratic, political, and economic bourgeoisie, will have had very little or no experience with what Wnuk-Lipiński describes as the 'every-day functioning of a market economy'⁴³. This point is particularly relevant as Kurdish decision makers will have to accommodate the fact that their region is still recovering from the traumas inflicted by the past, at the very centre of their development agenda. Over time, rank-and-file Kurds may come to realise that 'more freedom (particularly in the economic sphere) will probably bring about less equality, more personal risk, responsibility for one's own life, as well as more difficult choices'⁴⁴. Also the number of people able to adapt quickly to the new rules of a market society will be proportionally so small that it hardly makes a convincing model for success. The KRG will have to make sure that it has the necessary legal and regulatory checks and balances in place to prevent a rising minority of entrepreneurs from amassing quick fortunes by exploiting gaps in the transitional framework exposed by the limited supervisory role of the KRG and the existence of lucrative informal and second (shadow) economies. If not, suspicion and resentment may surface which then transforms into heightened political tensions. Stansfield puts forward the view that:

In this depressed scenario of a weakened agricultural sector, mass unemployment and dependency on imports, the informal sector has flourished, making a few people extremely wealthy and channeling significant funds to the political parties of Kurdistan and the KRG. This has resulted in an extremely vibrant informal sector, creating an uneasy dichotomy in Iraqi Kurdistan between the majority who are destitute and a minority of merchants who are extremely wealthy.⁴⁵

For the KRG this may be a price worth paying for the revenue benefits associated with transition to a market economy and increased oil wealth. An alternative approach resides in whether or not the KRG can introduce the concept of the dynamic entrepreneur as a widely accepted model for success, and an attractive alternative to the post-Ba'athist, post-sanctions, post-aid dependence mentality; and whether this new dynamic can be

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy*, pp. 58-59

balanced against initiatives to target unemployment and poverty in an egalitarian environment. If the KRG does not target unemployment (and the current lack of dynamism in the stagnating industrial and agricultural sectors) the transition to a market society is unlikely to bring about substantial increases in human development, or improvements to the standard of living inside Kurdistan, without reliance on the private sector and welfare mechanisms.

It is probable that a number of benefits of marketisation are already beginning to trickle down to some upper strata of society in Iraqi Kurdistan. As enumerated by Gomulka, the first stage of market reform can often result in positive initial outcomes heralded by: (1) the disappearance of shortages as a result of price liberalization; (2) a wider spectrum of choice, higher dollar wages and better access to imports; (3) better access to foreign know how; (4) improved incentives; (5) improved product composition; and (6) increased creditworthiness of the Kurdistan region of Iraq⁴⁶. For the majority of Kurdistan's population, however, household purchasing power remains depressingly low, manpower productivity remains low due to minimal absorption by agriculture and industry, unemployment stands currently above 70 per cent⁴⁷, domestic products are of inferior quality when compared to imports, and the banking system remains rudimentary and lacks the capacity to deal with the demands of a market economy.

The problems associated with these bitter truths usually take the form of maldevelopment, unemployment and social frustration⁴⁸. Kurdistan runs the serious risk of exacerbating unemployment, rural-urban migration and emigration as its experiment with marketisation advances. Such limiting factors raise questions about the KRG's ability to move away from dependence on aid and oil revenues, as well as their ability to create a truly free-standing economy in the long term. It remains to be seen whether or not an already problematic situation is, in fact, made worse by the application of the market principle prior to the necessary linkages being put in place for such radical economic reforms to take effect. Greater social inequalities can only lead to a rise in political opposition to the KRG from other quarters of Iraqi Kurdistan's political

⁴⁶ S. Gomulka, 'Economic and Political Constraints During Transition,' *Mimeo* (1993), in Wnuk-Lipiński, E. 'The Vicissitudes of the market principle,' *International Social Science Journal*, 140, 1994, pp. 185-200

⁴⁷ Stansfield, Op. Cit.

⁴⁸ E. Wnuk-Lipiński, Op. Cit.

landscape, including rising antinomy within the general populace. As highlighted by Seddon, the correlation between economic inequities and popular protest is never far away in underdeveloped countries. He argues that,

In virtually all cases, significant increases in the costs of basic goods and services (or the threat of these on top of increases already experienced) have preceded and may be said to have precipitated...outburst[s] of popular protest. The price of bread or flour and other staple foodstuffs appears to be particularly significant. This is in part because of the importance of these goods in household expenditure, especially for the urban poor, and in part because of their crucial symbolic value (particularly of bread) in Middle Eastern society.⁴⁹

In Iraqi Kurdistan, such tensions would most likely inhibit the planned economic transformation and could actually slow change whilst prolonging the region's political and economic instability. A critical factor remains how the dominant political factions respond to the emergence of grassroots societal opposition to the maldevelopment of Iraqi Kurdistan and perceived mismanagement by the KRG.

The creation of a deregulated free-market economy poses a considerable threat to social cohesion in Iraqi Kurdistan despite the numerous benefits which can be associated with economic decentralization and liberalization. Iraqi Kurdistan has entered radically unfamiliar economic territory, not because of any lack of necessary qualifications, but due to the fragile and relatively recent nature of successes experienced since the end of internecine fighting in late 1996⁵⁰. By unleashing the unfamiliar forces of a market driven system, the KRG must take responsibility for using Kurdistan as an economic laboratory for the trial of hitherto unfamiliar methodological principles. As highlighted by Wnuk-Lipiński, the introduction of a market regulated economy – and one which, by contemporary standards, exceeds all proscriptions laid down in the 1989 *Washington Consensus* – nearly always brings with it the problem of inequalities and inequities, particularly in the socio-economic sphere⁵¹. This, he argues, is caused by the fact that even if moderated by state intervention, 'the free market inevitably leads to higher

⁴⁹ D. Seddon, 'Austerity protests in response to economic liberalization in the Middle East,' in Niblock and Murphy (eds.), *Economic and Political Liberalisation in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1993), p. 106

⁵⁰ Stansfield, Op. Cit.

⁵¹ E. Wnuk-Lipiński, Op. Cit., p. 197

differentiation of incomes, hence to deeper inequalities in the standard of living⁵². In the context of Kurdistan, this form of socio-economic maldevelopment could lead to the further marginalization of the disenfranchised and displaced populations already within the region with potentially disastrous consequences, not only for the region, but also for the credibility of the KRG. Considering the fragile financial and economic balance which underpins the Kurdish unrecognised entity in Iraq, the KRG has limited resources for the radical redistribution of wealth needed to ensure social justice and democracy. The danger is that existing social stratifications will, over time, be ossified by the addition of personal income as a determinant of status in a Kurdish market society. This may entrench unemployment and the under-utilisation of labour potential as a permanent feature of social life in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Another important feature of transition to a more liberal market economy has been identified as the way in which some sections of society face serious problems in adapting to social and economic change⁵³. The KRG faces a crucial question: is a society, which suffered at the hands of Arab nationalist governments for over three decades, and witnessed the destruction of its most basic infrastructure, prepared to live in a more efficient economic system at the cost of social equality? Wnuk-Lipiński first asked this question in the context of post-communist Poland, but it is no less relevant to the situation of Iraqi Kurdistan as it questions the egalitarian ethics of the KRG and the KDP / PUK entente. He proposes that the actual answer may be misleading because responses will differ over time as the implementation of market rules is completed. However, there remains a stark warning for the KRG in Wnuk-Lipiński's analysis: 'For some (with low cognitive flexibility, usually related to the lower level of education and older age group) it may be an unbearable burden... This is a potential social foundation of the 'escape from freedom' syndrome, which may result in some kind of a populist movement under authoritarian leadership'⁵⁴. Dov Lynch argues that *de facto* states should be better integrated into international humanitarian networks as they face insurmountable problems such as departure of the young population, 'brain drain' and loss of knowledge and skills, corruption, crime and inadequate medical services. Lynch

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ E. Wnuk-Lipiński, Op. Cit., p. 197

suggests that the international community must give more help to unrecognised entities like Iraqi Kurdistan so that they may confront these challenges. However, he also admits that a different international mechanism will need to be constructed for each case⁵⁵.

By creating a framework for democracy and self-determination, Iraq's Kurds have shown that they will not be constrained by the bitter legacy of the past and that their new-found freedoms and *de facto* autonomy will not be surrendered without a fight. The KRG has already shown that it has the tenacity and the political will to implement reforms for the benefit of its people, whether or not it has the approval of the government in Baghdad. Iraqi Kurdistan, as an unrecognised entity, has shown that it can not only provide a unique model for reconstruction and economic redevelopment in the wake of sanctions and recent hostilities, but that its leaders and statesmen are capable of moving Iraqi Kurdistan towards the global economy and into the 21st century. Kurdistan is now in the grip of rapid economic change spurred on not only by inward investment, marketisation and reconstruction, but by a belief in a better future for a society that has suffered untold damage and human tragedy. There is, however, a long way to go and economic reform is still in its initial experimental stage. Kurdistan remains held back by poverty, lack of essential services, unemployment and the effects of migration and dispossession. Potentially hostile external forces may also hamper the process of economic regeneration. Further still, an unrecognised Kurdish region has the potential to destabilise the existing regional state system and economic relations between proximate sovereign states. As Michael Gunter points out, 'The Kurdish future in post-Saddam Iraq...will depend on the willingness of the Arab majority in Iraq to accept federalism, as well as the position of the United States and such neighbouring states as Turkey and Iran'⁵⁶. This situation is further complicated by the Turkish stance which would see the creation of an independent Kurdistan as a potential case for military adventurism.

Conclusion

As has been noted throughout this chapter, profound marketisation could have a very negative impact upon different socio-economic aspects of life in Iraqi Kurdistan and, if

⁵⁵ Dov Lynch, *Op. Cit.*, p. 132

⁵⁶ M. Gunter, *The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq: A Political Analysis* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), p. 86

this is a road the KRG wishes to take, there are lessons which can be learned from the experiences of transition societies in other parts of the world which may help Kurdish decision-makers avoid some of the traps other governments have failed to avoid. Development in Iraqi Kurdistan cannot come about by leaving everything to market forces, or a policy of liberalization and reliance on oil rents. The KRG should aim, on the one hand, to follow a strategy which uses the private sector to bring much needed knowledge and expertise into Iraqi Kurdistan for the development of essential services and, on the other hand, follow a strategy which minimizes the potential for social and political conflict caused by corruption and the elevation of private interests above all others. The KRG would be wise to build policies to counter social injustice into its framework for rebuilding the regional economy, and these policies should be aimed at transcending political and socio-economic disparities between the Kurds themselves and other regional ethno-political structures. Only in this way will Iraqi Kurdistan avoid the spectre of maldevelopment and political turbulence in the long term. Unrecognised status in such a situation could prove to be both a blessing and a curse for Iraqi Kurdistan as its lack of juridical standing precludes full accountability and confers a high level of autonomy to economic actors within the region.

On the one hand the Kurds have achieved a level of administrative autonomy unparalleled in their modern history and on the other the illegitimacy experienced by remaining legally unrecognised may inhibit investment, assistance and privatized relations with other states. Without the assistance of international society and good relations with metropolitan Iraq, the KRG will struggle to create equilibrium between its economic institutions (which are often so critical for growth) and the creation of wealth and the fair distribution of resources to the people who reside within the territorial limits of the unrecognised entity. The pressures which accompany unrecognised status will severely test the limits of political resolve in Iraqi Kurdistan unless greater political and ideological coherence can be achieved. A great deal will rest on the ability of notionally anti-Kurd regional powers to enter into mutual cooperation with the KRG for the future stability of the autonomous region. Unless this happens the unrecognised entity in Iraqi Kurdistan may, if it loses its current political stability, lapse into the predicament of a

non-viable Kurdish controlled outpost, and the potential for new internecine conflict over economic resources inside and outside the region will be increased.

The pursuit of economic liberalisation by the KRG is highly significant in that it represents a clear tactical and strategic methodology for the maintenance of the unrecognised entity which it controls. By achieving an impressive level of economic development in such a short space of time, the KRG sidestepped the central government in Baghdad and enfranchised itself through judicious use of international negotiation and expertise. This not only facilitated the economic and infrastructural redevelopment of the region, but it also established the relevance of the KRG (and other Kurdish political groups) in the geo-political landscape of the Middle East. Economic liberalisation has become one of the ideological tropes of the KRG as it seeks to promote itself as a progressive advocate of neo-liberal freedoms and security in the region. The adoption of such an ideological “role-play” has guaranteed the short to medium term survival of the KRG as an ally of Washington and a key player in regional geopolitics, but it has fallen significantly short of bestowing additional sovereignty and *de jure* legitimacy on the politics of state-building in northern Iraq. This is undoubtedly related to improvements in the security situation inside Iraq as a whole, as well as the gradual stabilisation of the economic and infrastructural apparatus of the state and its provinces.

As the Iraqi state is rehabilitated within international society, the Kurds and their pseudo-state in the north of the country face some stark realities. If the Iraqi state strengthens and rehabilitates itself (and its territorial sovereignty), the case for an independent Kurdistan is severely weakened and the symbolic transition to some form of *de facto* sovereignty without violent conflict appears remote. If the Kurdish attempt at state-building stalls in the presence of an emboldened and rehabilitated Iraqi regime, the retention of the region’s economic gains and infrastructure may come to define the political identity of the KRG in such a way that the region becomes a free-trade entrepôt and little else. This would result in Iraqi Kurdistan coming to resemble something of a socially bifurcated Kurdish fiefdom in the north of the country, with all the negative implications such a picture entails. In the opinion of this author such an outcome would be highly divisive from a nationalist perspective given that the Kurds have experienced autonomy and self-rule over an extended period. It is probable that the KRG and interest

groups within Iraqi Kurdistan are already considering the implications of a regression from current levels of autonomy and economic self-determination at the tactical level, given that the wider strategic objective of attaining some form of international legal recognition and sovereignty appears to be in abeyance. How this will manifest politically is unclear but the potential for political tensions and ethno-political conflict, should such a regression arise, must not be ignored.

6. Sovereignty, Secession and the Question of “Stateness” in Unrecognised Entities

One of the recurring problems faced by scholars is that unrecognised state-like entities are highly resistant to categorisation, typological reduction, and the formation of formal theories and models. These entities exist and operate with varying degrees of autonomy but arguably not in the unitary way they have been portrayed in academic literature so far. The perennial debates on how best to standardise the terminology used to describe such phenomena, or whether the next best contribution to the field will take the form of the empirical, the comparative, the theoretical, and so on, merely indicates the level of apprehension and disarray present within the study of unrecognised entities today. This problem is self-perpetuating due largely to the fact that unrecognised entities are an increasingly relevant research area within select academic disciplines at the time of writing. A point has been reached where depictions of legitimacy and sovereignty have received continual multidisciplinary treatment and revision without any significant shift in our understanding of how international relations and political science theories can work with conceptually indeterminable forms like unrecognised entities. It is as if the field of study into unrecognised entities has condemned its scholars to the fate of cooks tasked with the unenviable chore of repeatedly preparing different dishes with the same limited ingredients. Taken another way, one could easily be forgiven for feeling that the limited body of literature on unrecognised entities has commanded uncritical deference in subsequent scholarship, with the result that the intellectual diet of scholars researching the field has largely become the same conceptual meat with different conjectural gravy.

In the preceding chapters of this thesis tensions were introduced in order to flag-up areas of concern, and to identify areas in which theoretical discussions of the problems posed by unrecognised entities were either absent or could be taken further than they already have. The previous chapter’s discussion of economic liberalisation in Iraqi Kurdistan served to enhance our understanding of the operative - the act of engaging in ‘the political’ - whilst enmeshed in a complex interplay between the possession of autonomy and illegitimacy at the same time. Central to this argument is the hypothesis that the attainment of recognition and statehood is not, as several scholars have implied, a

universal goal for unrecognised entities; and the 'reason of state' discussed in the second chapter is not reducible to either the development of pluralistic democracy or the adherence to standards and virtues esteemed by international society. So far the unrecognised entity has been problematised so that we can probe deeper into why such aberrations in the logic of statecraft endure in a perpetual state of illegitimacy yet exert considerable resilience in their asymmetric relationship with sovereign bodies. This thesis contends that unrecognised entities have, for some time, been a key part of the symbolic infrastructure of international politics yet our ability to conceptualise the substantially dynamic attributes of these phenomena has been poor within scholarly discourses. These entities, it can be argued, are part of a spectrum of autonomous structures which operate and exist in a manner which often subverts the rules of international order, but nonetheless become accommodated due to a wide range of unwritten rules and idiosyncrasies built into the praxis of international relations and geopolitics at the formal level.

This chapter explores how the functions of secession and autonomy coalesce in ways which give unrecognised states traction and leverage in international society. Methodologically, the following analysis carries forward the analytical approach adopted in preceding chapters by analysing and giving detailed consideration to political science and international relations theories in ways which have so far been absent in literature on unrecognised states. Built into this approach is the recognition that radical theoretical expositions are not necessarily complete without grounding them in the necessary range of conceptual contexts specific to the processes in question. To achieve this synthesis, the chapter provides analysis of political science perspectives on core concepts surrounding secession so that the operation of unrecognised states at the functional level becomes more apparent. This chapter highlights how the structural and functional processes of unrecognised entities manifest in very different contexts to those in which the dependent variables of government, population, and cartographic disambiguation dictate the outcome of state level interactions with the rest of international society. It also furthers the discussion of how scholars have situated unrecognised entities in political science theory.

Positioning the Object

Unrecognised state-like entities in the international system are inherently ambiguous. This structural aspect has long been downplayed in international relations and political science analysis as it is a realisation which is least conducive to the integration of unrecognised entities into theoretical conventions and normative schema. The few attempts made by researchers to solve problems concerning terminology and structure, which bedevil the study of these phenomena, are equally disrupted by the ambiguous nature of these political units. The denial of these fundamental ambiguities, and ongoing attempts to define, categorise, rationalise and essentially ossify the conceptual notion of unrecognised entities have merely led to more confusion and division between scholars focused on this issue. The question is why?

Be it Jackson's *Quasi-State*, Pegg's *De Facto State*, or Kolstø's rehabilitation of Jackson's quasi-state, the oversight that all these conceptual stances have in common is that they are complicit in treating unrecognised entities as an *object vis-à-vis* an existence as a *unit* in the international system. It is assumed from the outset that unrecognised entities are states 'in all but name', but this assumption attributes far too much conceptual solidity and formality to what is an inherently ambiguous object. Considered from a different angle, the question may be asked repeatedly why such aberrations in the logic of statecraft do not represent international *personalities* like the sovereign nation state. Answers to this question most often take the form of an analysis of international law concerning definitions of statehood under treaties such as the *Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States* in 1933. The use of such an approach in the works of Scott Pegg firmly embedded international relations discourses into the analysis of unrecognised entities as a standardised framework. However, at a time when the formal logic of statecraft in international relations theory was also undergoing significant refiguring and theoretical questioning, the continued use of comparative political methods in attempts at defining the ambiguous physics which allowed unrecognised entities to survive brought researchers no nearer to tackling the many unanswered questions. The preoccupation with explaining what the unrecognised entity *actually* represents, via the application of ill-fitting international relations and political science

frameworks, symbolises the problematic and disjointed relationship between academic inquiry and the *object* which is its focus.

The treatment of unrecognised entities as objects which must somehow be habilitated or rehabilitated, placed, contextualised or defined in terms dictated by conventional wisdom (or contemporary salience) is the source of the inertia which currently plagues academic inquiry into this political phenomenon, and the canon of literature devoted to it. The warrant which enables this author to put forward this claim is based in no small part upon one of the central pillars of this thesis – namely, that the case presented by Iraqi Kurdistan undermines established theories and stretches the frameworks and definitions in early literature on *de facto* / unrecognised entities due to factors of case-specificity which exclude the Iraqi example. The problem here is that Iraqi Kurdistan can be considered an unrecognised entity closely fitting the definition of a *de facto* state, yet its developmental trajectory has excluded it from the very field of research from which its case demands so much attention. This marginalisation of the case of Iraqi Kurdistan points to an already well established problem within the field. What we see is no unconscious oversight but the systematic exclusion of a case which disrupts some of the fundamental assumptions and conjectures upon which our understanding of unrecognised state-like entities is based. Iraqi Kurdistan's example alters the parameters of early definitions which remain well established within the literature on unrecognised states. This ambiguity, or ambiguous and problematic status within the literature, is here identified as the site of a significant theoretical challenge as there is no agreed conceptual framework or definition to accommodate Iraqi Kurdistan and the status of the KRG in the international theory of unrecognised entities. Essentially, Iraqi Kurdistan challenges the *mathesis* of state function depicted in existing works by Pegg, Lynch, Kolstø (and others), thereby rendering the politics of unrecognised entities specific to dynamics observable in a narrow range of cases. Equally, through the challenge Iraqi Kurdistan's case fields toward existing theoretical and conceptual schema, the explicit coverage of other cases (such as Taiwan and the TRNC) within earlier definitions is also brought into question.

Iraqi Kurdistan, as an unrecognised state-like entity, exists in the international system but should not be assumed to represent a *unit* or *object* of the international system in the same respect given to fully sovereign bodies. The space occupied by the territory

and government in question, if treated according to conventions of realist theory, lacks an essential stability (or coherence) which is demanded by and for the definitions which govern our understanding of the physics of the international system. Iraqi Kurdistan therefore resides in what has already been identified as an existential paradox. As multidisciplinary scholarship on unrecognised entities has hammered away at the problem, the disparate approaches involved have handled different pieces of the puzzle in a methodologically diverse manner – producing an equally diverse range of theoretical proposals. This has led to a fragmentation of the unrecognised states debate – a fragmentation which has created a largely irrelevant morphological preoccupation with the designations used to label the object in question, rather than tackling the now eclectic theoretical divisions which continue to undermine advanced discussion of the problem in question.

We can assume the existence of dynamic processes underpinning and reinforcing the function of ambiguous political entities in the international system. The reduction of the unrecognised entity to the level of *an object* within *a category* of disparate entities, however, masks the processes which this thesis argues are far more vital, subtle, nuanced, and (potentially) more revolutionary in terms of our understanding why functional space exists in the international system for ambiguous, state-like entities to operate. If there is a dynamic system underlying the function of unrecognised entities, then it underlies the state system; if it underlies the state system then it potentially underlies everything in the international system (assuming the applicability of globalisation theory and neo-realist theory), or at least everything that rational international relations scientific thinking concerns itself with. In this way we are forced to ask what the unrecognised entity *is*, where does *it* ‘exist’ in the international continuum, and, more fundamentally, what does it do? And perhaps a more important question is: *what are the parameters?*

Ambiguous political entities always have parameters within which they evolve and establish themselves. A truism this may be, but a great many contributors to the unrecognised entities discussion have assumed that the parameters lie within questions of sovereignty and formalised definitions of statecraft alone. These parameters however are but an adjunct to the subversion of conventional definitions which best describe the function of the unrecognised entity. This is a realisation which has scarcely received mention in the body of literature that concerns us. For instance, sovereignty is best

understood as a secondary or tertiary consideration in that the unrecognised entity is often highly established in terms of its functionality and processes well before such theoretical preoccupations become at all relevant. Ambiguous state-like entities are convenient test-beds for the application of theories of sovereignty (given that sovereignty is not a static, singular concept), but the theoretical parameters of sovereignty are not vital to either the formation or sustainability of an unrecognised entity. Unrecognised entities have displayed time and again that a lack of sovereignty is no impediment to existence. Therefore, the 'quest for sovereignty' thesis which casts statehood and recognition as the ultimate objective, the ultimate existential rationale and methodological purpose underlying the function of the unrecognised state-like entity, falsely establishes the primacy of attaining *de jure* statehood at a level which reduces, simplifies and ignores other parameters in which such entities function.

Stephen D. Krasner's works on sovereignty provide us with a wide range of valuable insights into the nature of sovereignty and how it can be adapted and applied in a diverse array of forms, to a diverse array of ends and outcomes. The concept of sovereignty, he argues, is not an 'inseparable set of rules'¹ as we often witness it deployed to define the position of unrecognised entities, but rather a more complex and evolutionary system for interactions between actors in international society. Krasner concludes *Abiding Sovereignty* (2001), a paper designed to illustrate the complexity of sovereignty as a historical concept within international relations, by urging us to consider sovereignty as far removed from representing a static, conventional norm. He writes that:

New rules could emerge in an evolutionary way as a result of trial and error by rational but myopic actors. But these arrangements, for instance, international policing, are likely to coexist with rather than supplant conventional sovereign structures. *Sovereignty's resilience is, if nothing else, a reflection of its tolerance for alternatives.*²

This 'tolerance for alternatives' at the heart of the question of sovereignty reinforces some of the core hypotheses presented here, hypotheses which propose that it is not the *object* (apropos *sovereignty*) which is of primary importance for solving the many theoretical problems concerning ambiguous state-like entities.

¹ Stephen D. Krasner, 'Abiding Sovereignty', *International Political Science Review*, 22:3, 2001, p. 248

² *Ibid.*, p. 248, (emphasis added).

Article 1 of the *Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States 1933* promoted the following dogma: ‘The state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.’³ The problem inherent in bringing such normative qualifications to bear in a discussion of ambiguous state-like entities is that the historical conventions of international law (in which the morphology of sovereignty is enshrined) represent the logic of distinct periods of international relations thinking, as well as responses to the *zeitgeist* of the period. Such qualifications are of dubious utility in a contemporary era which Krasner and others have recognised as having unique attributes which reflect challenges to statehood and new organisational methodologies for the practice of politics and authority. That is not to say that we are witnessing the irrelevance, or devaluing of the state as a unit in the international system, but rather the development of new parameters for statecraft, politics, organisation, and mobilisation.

Applying the criteria of the Montevideo and other conventions to more ambiguous political entities results in the inevitable identification of deficiencies apropos definitions laid down in international law. The suffix ‘-state’ is consistently applied to unrecognised entities in cases of extreme ambiguity despite the fact that representational government, population, cartographic boundaries, relations with other states, and internal sovereignty are visibly indistinct and contested in many cases. By interpreting the presence of ambiguous state-like entities as either 1) surreptitious statecraft, or 2) a quest for *de jure* sovereignty (with respect to the conventions and norms of international law) relies heavily on the strong resemblance between certain aspects of the function of unrecognised entities and the realist theory of *system*, *structure*, and the *balance of power*, which promotes the view that the state is the most important actor in international politics, and must therefore be desired by unrecognised, illegitimate entities as a default position.

Part of the problem with over-“stating” ambiguous entities such as Iraqi Kurdistan, and describing them as semi-states, quasi-states and so on, is that the metaphorical nature of this form of ethno-political representation becomes lost and the

³ Article 1, Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933), Signed at Montevideo, 26 December 1933.

symbolic processes that allow the entities' ambiguous status to nonetheless endure are obscured by the formalisation required by conventions of politics and scholarship. The processes at work in an ambiguous political entity like Iraqi Kurdistan go far deeper than a superficial resemblance to the structural functions of a sovereign state. There are corresponding physical elements which indeed situate these entities within the theoretical structures of statecraft but, in symbolic terms, the link which would allow ambiguous entities like Iraqi Kurdistan to be governed or rationalised in terms of internal, domestic, Westphalian sovereignty, are purely metaphorical (if not absent). The use of the term 'metaphor' here is used in a familiar sense, that is, to explain the problematic use of 'state' as a way of explaining what an ambiguous political entity is by means of another concept which is not directly related to it. The inference here is that the processes and functions of an unrecognised entity are not as directly related to those encountered in the legitimate state, as is so often assumed, thereby making its relationship with the sovereign state a metaphorical one. There are proportionally very few configurations available in the accepted typology of states when compared to the vast proportion of configurations available to ambiguous political entities. It is improbable to suggest that to be 'state-like' today signifies that one will be 'a state' tomorrow. The two are not coterminous given the differentiated systems in which the actors exist.

By infusing ambiguous and unrecognised entities with properties of statehood when the necessary parameters for statehood have not been established, creates a very acute problem for this field of research. Unrecognised entities are exactly that – *unrecognised*. They have not attained admission to the club of states and remain in a state of ambiguity and illegitimacy precisely because of their status and latecomer position on the political continuum of statecraft in international society. It has been demonstrated in the Caucasus and elsewhere that even if an unrecognised entity fulfils many of the formal criteria necessary for statehood, the complex geo-political situations in which they function often leave no obligation for recognition, and even if recognition is attained (such as in the case of Kosovo) it may remain disputed by other states who do not recognise the political basis on which such recognition has been bestowed. Outside the best-case scenarios, other ambiguous political entities are even less appropriate examples for application of the suffix '-state'. Iraqi Kurdistan, for example, is not a state in any formal sense and it is highly dubious whether or not such a state could ever exist in

northern Iraq given the numerous constraints it faces. Therefore, it is a serious error to assume that the entities in question can, or should, be objectified as states 'in all but name', states 'in waiting', or even '*de facto*' states. In this way, the argument presented here rejects the established morphology assigned to the problem of unrecognised and ambiguous political entities. The proposed alternative is one which does not attempt to redefine or re-categorise the unit or object in question (which seems to be the perennial preoccupation of many analysts), nor an attempt to advocate the rehabilitation or recognition of these entities; but rather the case is argued that the function of ambiguous political entities, as a process of the partitioning of political space in the international system, is far more important for the future examination of the problem.

Monte Palmer, in a review of Scott Pegg's book *International Society and the De Facto State*⁴ for the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES), took issue with Pegg's 'implicit assumption that *de facto* states are more effective than the states from which they are attempting to secede.' He also added 'Effectiveness in opposition is a poor guide to future performance.'⁵ Palmer's critique points to problems in assuming equivalence with statehood in the study of unrecognised political entities. The subject is too diverse, and generalisation far too difficult for us to cast unrecognised entities as unitary actors involved in the pursuit of coherent and consistent nation-building projects. Equally problematic is the depiction of civic nation building in unrecognised entities. The thesis that *de facto* states operate more effectively than the metropolitan parent state represents an extreme form of equivalence with *de jure* statehood that ignores other variables which limit civic nation-building, and state-building in a situation of illegitimacy and ambiguity. Such a top-down analysis requires modification in that it dilutes or chooses to overlook the demanding nature of civic nation-building. It again depicts the object of study as a unitary actor and uses this tableau as a springboard for advocating an unrealistic array of policy responses.

The foundations laid by Scott Pegg for the *de facto* state have, in this regard, led to a narrowing of case generality appearing in international relations and political science scholarship on unrecognised entities. It is a major flaw to assume that ambiguous or unrecognised political entities act as monolithic unitary actors in the international system

⁴ Scott Pegg, *International Society and the De Facto State* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998)

⁵ Monte Palmer, Review, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 33:3, August 2001, pp. 469-70.

as it is to assume they can be defined through rigid criteria and narrow case selection. These flawed assumptions (which lie at the very heart of international relations and security studies approaches to the problem) limit depth of analysis in the literature and creates an image of the unrecognised entity in which no mention is made of the importance of local identities, histories, traditions, and actors which fuel these political movements and secessionist agendas. It also fails to give a sense of the varied responses which can subvert or undermine the official politics of the centre surrounding these ambiguous political situations.

Secession's Conceptual Complexity within the Study of Unrecognised Entities

Secession endures as a defining feature of the emergence and subsequent formation of unrecognised entities yet very little theoretical engagement with the concept has emerged from this field of study. Although each case differs markedly from the next in terms of the reasons for secession and the methods used to pursue separation from a metropolitan sovereign, the concept of secession occupies a central place in the study of unrecognised entities. However its complexity is rarely discussed. Secession as an objective is often assumed when unrecognised entities are studied, and the concept is one of the defining qualities attributed to so-called *de facto* states. The terms 'separatism' and 'separatist' possess connotations very different to those of secession due to the manner in which the preceding terms are often applied in a negative sense associated with ethnic or ethno-political militancy. Secession should, therefore, not be confused with separatism at the conceptual level. Very few studies on unrecognised entities pause to examine the conceptual structures of secession and the term often becomes generalised in scholarly usage. By overlooking the complex conceptual structures of secession and focusing instead on an international relations perspective of the problem, unrecognised entities have been shaped in relation to sovereign bodies in a manner which distorts the trajectory of autonomy movements and ignores the partitioning of political space and the causal relationship between ethno-politics and the desire to secede in each case. By completely removing equivalences with states, statecraft, stateness and statehood, the ethno-political foundations underlying the formation of unrecognised entities can be restored and secession, as a conceptual structure central to analysis of autonomy movements and the break-up of states, is revealed to be a more fundamental dynamic than the quest for *de*

jure recognition which receives such primacy in academic studies of unrecognised entities.

Secession has come to possess a political meaning closely associated with challenges to formalised territorial integrity, challenges which aim to establish the claims and rights of ethnic groups and autonomy movements. Hudson Meadwell points out that this common usage of the term secession is a relatively recent deployment of the concept shaped by the myriad calls for self-determination which emerged during the twentieth century; rather than earlier calls for state rights in a union or compact (as the term had previously been used)⁶. Meadwell asserts that the contemporary usage of the term often narrows the broader historical contexts, conceptual structures, and political meanings associated with secession. Concerning the justifications for secession, he highlights an equally relevant shift in meaning:

The primary basis of justification for secession in international society has been, since 1945, a national right of self-determination. It has replaced the language of state rights. As the one replaced the other, the issue of territorial integrity became more important. There was no presumption of territorial integrity in the putative political unions that were the context of compact theories and of the rights of constituent states. Territorial integrity is the desideratum that has driven a wedge between the right of self-determination and a right to secede in customary international law. The presumptive importance of territorial integrity has come about because territorial states became more important sources of political order than unions.⁷

It is therefore important that unrecognised entities are situated on a historical continuum which recognises the changed political meaning of secession after 1945. Throughout the Cold War the importance of territorial integrity and the maintenance of existing state structures in the face of ethnic anarchy, changed the character of self-determination within a political environment coloured by decolonisation and post-colonial movements, as well as increased political mobilisation around rights-based agendas in all parts of the world. However, Meadwell proposes that ‘Zones of Peace seem as plausible a background condition for the occurrence of secession as do zones of war’⁸ urging us to be mindful that it is not always the descent into conflict, or the thawing of ‘frozen’ conflicts, which precede the creation of unrecognised entities through the pursuit of secession.

⁶ Hudson Meadwell, ‘Secession, States and International Society,’ *Review of International Studies*, 25, (1999), pp. 371-387.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

By abandoning the notion that unrecognised entities are *de facto* states, or states ‘in all but name’ representing a unique paradigm in the formation of international order, it becomes far easier to place these ambiguous political scenarios on a continuum which includes examples of secessionist ambition such as the historical cases provided by Bangladesh, Ireland, Quebec, the American South alongside more contemporaneous examples of secession, political partition and self-determination movements occurring in regions such as the Balkans, Iraqi Kurdistan, Chechnya, Somaliland, the TRNC, Taiwan and other, less well researched, micro-conflicts. By removing unrecognised entities from the conceptual lineage of secession, and presenting them as a uniquely differentiated object in the history of state break-up, there is a very real risk that research and inquiry into these entities develops a lack of connectivity with studies of self-determination, asymmetric federal arrangements, and studies into contemporary forms of political partition that are not expressly concerned with sovereignty or the creation of pseudo-states. There is no reason why any of the unrecognised entities currently manifest in the international system should be recognised as *de jure* sovereign bodies when it is quite apparent that the level of political mobilisation and autonomous governance visible in many of these cases confers no causal force other than physical self-preservation which can be accommodated and limited, as in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, without reducing the territorial integrity of the states around them.

Distinguishing Partition and Secession

There are many other issues related to secession which are notable by their absence from contemporary scholarship into unrecognised entities. Brendan O’Leary’s work into political partition raises some startling questions which unsettle a great many of the presumptions found within research into *de facto* states. In *Analysing Partition: Definition, Classification And Explanation* (2006) O’Leary argues that secession and partition should not be conflated as partition ‘objectively divides a previously unified territorial entity’⁹, whereas secession ‘unwinds time to a previous territorial order, when there was no unity.’¹⁰ The distinction O’Leary makes is carelessly overlooked by scholars eager to jump headlong into discussions of the political status of breakaway entities.

⁹ Brendan O’Leary, ‘Analysing Partition: Definition, Classification And Explanation’, *MFPP Working Papers*, 27, (2006), p. 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Secession is assumed in the case of all *de facto* states, and is built into the very definition proposed by Scott Pegg. Conceptually this is too broad and little distinction is made between the processes of partition and secession, and how these processes define the status of the separated entities thereafter. It is possible to have a *de facto* partition without *de facto* secession (as O’Leary points out to be the case with Taiwan¹¹) but to then declare a secessionist entity to be a *de facto* state takes the discussion into radically problematic territory, as in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, for the unrecognised entity remains a *de facto* geographic and political component of an existing state. O’Leary also argues that a partition ‘involves a *border adjustment*, because there must be a fresh, novel border, but a secession just involves a *border transformation*: the break-up of the prior sovereign entity converting the previously agreed (internal) border to a sovereign demarcation.’¹² When one looks at the example presented by Iraqi Kurdistan, it becomes clear that the representative unit – a self-governing autonomous entity – would not be able to secede from Iraq without what O’Leary terms a “fresh cut” of the type he uses to distinguish partition from secession and liberation movements. Secession and partition should not be conflated, or treated as coterminous, but it would also be extremely careless to advocate a model of state break-up where the possibility of such a break-up containing elements of both partition and secession is excluded. The conceptualisation of *de facto* states, quasi-states, and other units as “secessionist entities” gives exclusivity to secession which elevates it to the status of a precursor to statehood, thereby excluding the possibility of the “fresh cut” of partition as an intermediate process or outcome. This is again symptomatic of problems encountered when treating unrecognised states with a level of theoretical uniformity which is absent when viewed from a historicist perspective. Thought of another way, the distinct lack of historical inquiry included in political science and international relations assessments of the status of unrecognised entities may account for the portrayal of secessionist entities as *de facto* states and unitary actors acting outside the sanctions and constraints of international law when quite clearly the opposite is the case.

Secession’s complex interplay between the right of a political movement to withdraw from a sovereign state, and the ability of the sovereign state to prevent or

¹¹ Ibid., p. 7.

¹² Ibid.

accommodate such action gives rise to processes so diverse in terms of their political contexts that using secession to define the very essence of the breakaway territory ignores not only the idiosyncrasies and political vicissitudes of each case, but also the specific historical continuum of political developments attached to each case. It is important to recognise the role of secession as part of a wider process of developing the 'reason of state' discussed in the second chapter, however, the unrecognised entity cannot sustain itself in a state of perpetually aborted secession (as is the case with Iraqi Kurdistan) and there is little to suggest that such a strategy yields any advantage for the sustainability of a self-determination agenda. To define an unrecognised entity as 'secessionist entity'¹³, however clear from an axiomatic point of view, has yet to arrive at its true concept. There is a deficiency of thought here on the ontological side given that these ambiguous state-like entities are far from unified political actors.

Policy makers need groupings and unrecognised entities have been depicted by scholars as a grouping of secessionist entities displaying an 'order' or coherence attributable to the emergence of structures of governance, defined territorial limits and populations. In addition the qualification of lacking representational dialogue with the international community is normally added to the mix. But there are major questions to be asked around the existence of such a uniformity or 'order' amongst this figurative grouping of unrecognised and ambiguous political entities. Scholars analysing ethno-political conflict, state break-up, civil war and other forms of intrastate anarchy rarely consider what it means to advocate a pattern or order to unrecognised entities. If you try to reformulate these considerations and questions very precisely, you are forced to consider what sort of order there could be? The perennial problem with attributing order to unrecognised entities is that the developmental dynamics related to secession and state break-up are not things that can be rigorously pinned down, or encapsulated in normative models.

Definitions are enormously problematic in this regard, particularly so when discussing ambiguous political entities. There are an endless number of possible definitions, from international relations and political science or some related discipline,

¹³ Scott Pegg, 'De Facto States in the International System,' Institute of International Relations, University of British Columbia, Working Paper No.21, 1998, p. 1.

of what an unrecognised entity is. We can proof the presence of this problem simply by examining the opening chapters of a wide range of literature on unrecognised entities and charting the explicit recognition of the terminological confusion which permeates the field of study. To ask the question ‘what is this object?’ in relation to unrecognised entities is seen as a very important question and departure point for further enquiry. However the answers fielded to that question are largely conjectural and based on speculative arguments about the nature of sovereignty, international order and autonomy movements. The problem is that you can construct rational questions around the similarities between an number of otherwise differentiated cases, but to group them in an archetype of order (the archetype of the *de facto* states, the quasi-states, the semi-states etc.) is to impose a sequential logic to something bordering on the paradoxical. This has far-reaching implications for the study of unrecognised entities as many intelligent scholars have fielded predictive conclusions in apparent conflict with the enigmatic and unpredictable system embedded within the subject matter. In some instances they themselves acknowledge this unpredictability from the outset.

For the reasons stated above it is extremely important to further our understanding of the role played by secession and its myriad political manifestations. Scholars began by asking whether there is order in the international system governing accession to statehood, and whether or not the mechanics of this process was enshrined in international law. The unintended result of this probing was that the definitions taken to define and represent international order, in the study of unrecognised entities, took order in any sense and threw it into question. It was assumed that unrecognised entities were no longer mysterious, that they could be exactly defined, grouped and categorised. The works of Pegg, Kolstø, Lynch, King, *et al* claimed to demystify the question of ‘unrecognised states’, but in actuality the unknown quantities surrounding these ambiguous objects were merely pushed aside or displaced.

The critical centrality of secession can be re-established through examining the work of scholars who have concentrated on the theoretical aspects of the processes behind intrastate conflict. Lawrence M. Anderson’s work on secession delivers several important insights that have not been adapted for study into unrecognised entities. Anderson points to an underlying mimesis of the mores of the international system which validates the realist and neo-classical realist viewpoints concerning the centrality of the

state as the principle unit of organisation in an otherwise anarchic system. Concerning secessionist movements, Anderson presents the case that separatist aspirations are not as radical a departure from convention as some scholars are inclined to suggest. Anderson summarises his theoretical position by arguing that in:

[A] perverse validation of the international state system – and the enduring importance of states within this system – secessionists seek to dismember an existing state to create a new state in which the secessionist group is dominant. Methods of resolving this type of conflict need to reconcile two seemingly contradictory norms within the international political system. On one hand, existing states prioritizing the norm of maintaining the territorial integrity of states will attempt to suppress – often violently – groups seeking separation. On the other, groups within existing states justify their secessionist goals by invoking the ambiguous norm of national self-determination.¹⁴

Anderson's identification of contradictory norms and the invocation of national self-determination by secessionist groups complement O'Leary's distinctions between secession and partition. Anderson's examination of the paradox of autonomy recognises that '[under] autonomy regimes, international boundaries are not altered – thus satisfying the norm of maintaining territorial integrity, and the group in conflict is able to enjoy sovereignty over public policy areas crucial to its survival – thus seemingly satisfying the norm of self-determination.'¹⁵ The "fresh cut" which O'Leary uses to differentiate between the act of partition and the act of seceding requires the alteration of international boundaries. The model of secession which emerges from an analysis of the theories put forward by Anderson and O'Leary lead us nearer to identifying problems in grouping and categorizing unrecognised entities.

The creation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) can be historicised as a political partition and not secession. Why, then, is the TRNC regarded as a *de facto* state in flagship literature on unrecognised entities? Scott Pegg describes the case of the TRNC as 'The classic example of actively opposing the *de facto* state's existence through the use of international embargoes and sanctions...'¹⁶ and goes on to list a raft of statistics designed to reinforce the hypothesis that *de facto* states occupy a perfunctory position. As much as the statistical evidence reinforces Pegg's argument, he

¹⁴ Lawrence M. Anderson, 'Exploring the paradox of autonomy: federalism and secession in North America,' *Regional & Federal Studies*, 14:1, (2004), pp. 89.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Scott Pegg, 'De Facto States in the International System', Institute of International Relations – University of British Columbia, *Working Paper No. 21* (1998), p. 4.

is silent on theoretical complexities surrounding political partition in the case of Cyprus which potentially displace the relevance of the TRNC as a case of *de facto* statehood. It appears that marginalisation and exclusion from the international community is the dominant prerequisite in Pegg's model of unrecognised statehood and that such predicaments (in the present) are of greater relevance than material dynamics underpinning ethno-political cleavages and fissures. Again this tendency within the literature to advocate a view of secessionist entities and territories, formed out of political partition, as precursor states 'in all but name' becomes a dominant feature of earlier inquiry into unrecognised entities. Despite the problem of partitions such as the one found between Turkish and Greek Cypriots being rarer, more intractable and less likely to lead to territorial 'recognition' than secession¹⁷, none of these distinct variations in outcomes of territorial revision are directly addressed by Pegg and other advocates of the *de facto* states paradigm. It is this researcher's view that omissions of this sort indicate a purposely one-dimensional treatment of secession in order to advocate a paradigm in which ethno-political mobilisation, in a perceived periphery, is given weight and resonance far beyond its actual *de jure* significance and potential.

Secession is sometimes hypothesised as a 'just-cause', a remedial right of an existing nation to self-determination, often as a response to prior injustices. However, in notable examples of literature on *de facto* states, the just-cause of secession is often advocated from a structuralist perspective rather than rights based perspectives. It is the structure of ethnic and nation-state formations which forms the basis of most hypotheses which portray unrecognised entities as states 'in all but name'. The legal and geopolitical case for secession, independence and recognition is recognisably weak in a great many cases, making the rights-based perspective on secession problematic due to the way in which international law takes a dim view of secessionist movements, revanchism and irredentism. A problem with the just-cause approach to ethno-political conflicts and the emergence of secessionist entities is the potential to ignore the constitutional and multinational dynamic which surround the unrecognised entity. This problem is often the reason why advocating the recognition of a *new* state remains in a state of perpetual abeyance. No matter how effective a secessionist entity is at governing or creating the

¹⁷ See O'Leary, Op. Cit.

mechanisms of democratic administration, the legal basis for recognition need not follow given the potential for conflict and the negation of regional peace. Illegitimacy (the lack of *de jure* recognition) in such a situation does not hamper the effective maintenance of an unrecognised entities' autonomy, nor does it de-legitimise any rights based claims to self-determination.

Illegitimacy is an omni-present side-effect of the pursuit of secession by ethno-nationalist movements and often delivers a problematic status to the territories acquired by them. Scholars appear keen to ask why illegitimacy bedevils these states 'in-waiting' without fully clarifying the reality that these are territorial gains by secessionist movements and not states. Indeed, the structural vestiges of statehood can be fashioned by these movements in order to further the coherence of their territorial autonomy and their ability to interact with and among sovereign states, but secession and secessionist aspiration is rarely condoned through recognition unless the legal precedent is set in international law, constitutional arrangements or geopolitical agreement. The secessionist claims of unrecognised entities are often tainted in this regard, particularly following ethnic war, and it is extremely difficult to advocate a just-cause hypothesis in these situations without recourse to romantic ethnicism or self-referential nationalism.

The problem of secession is not just different from other theoretical problems encountered during analysis of unrecognised entities, it *precedes* them. So the problem of secession is *the* problem of unrecognised entities from which most other factors are positively influenced. Not all unrecognised entities should be considered secessionist but the threat or potential for secession is never far away (in ideological terms or as a strategic option). Therefore it is not the entity per se which is secessionist, but the existence of secession as political strategy within a complex ethno-political game. If secession poses no rational advantage, it will not be pursued as a dominant strategy. That is not to say that it will not be encouraged by other parties including the metropolitan centre. Post-Soviet and Eurasian studies specialists proposed a very basic unitary conception of *de facto* states which attributed too much significance to *form* and empirical sub-factors rather than engaging with relevant political science theories which can be brought to bear in the study of unrecognised entities. *De facto* states are not necessarily best understood through placing the latter object in diametric opposition to the sovereign state. The reason is simply that it immediately creates a centre / periphery

dichotomy within our analysis which then filters through into a simplistic portrayal of secession as a periphery-based asymmetric endeavour. Such an approach lacks theoretical nuance, and this lack of nuance is one of the central charges this thesis fields against the *de facto* state archetype which emerged from post-Soviet studies in the 1990s.

Beyond Gestalt

The theoretical problems identified in this thesis stem largely from the treatment of unrecognised entities as a *Gestalt* object – existing as a conceptually ‘whole’ and unitary form. The use of the term *gestalt* in this context describes how existing academic approaches treat and view the concept of unrecognised entities as an organised whole or that which is perceived to be ‘more than’ the sum of its parts. For example to take the view that the state, as an international ‘person’, is the uppermost unit of political and constitutional mobilisation in international order is to view it as a *gestalt*. To view the state as an aggregation of polities, ethno-national identities, multinational interactions, ethnospheres, ideospheres¹⁸ and individuals would be to view it as a sum of parts or multiplicity. A more rational model is required in order to understand the complex forces which act upon unrecognised entities. There are intrinsic errors with our ‘*gestalt*’ understanding of unrecognised entities. These are extrinsic errors of categorical logic, including a number of definitive assumptions which may be regarded as empirical falsehoods which promote a simplistic but erroneous model of unrecognised entities in the international system. The early *de facto* states model proposed by Pegg and the *quasi*-states model proposed by Kolstø formalise a categorical *gestalt* understanding which has evolved into a pervasive and habitual dogma in academic approaches to the issue of *de facto* independence and secession.

Many empiric errors stem from approaching categorisation as a matter of pragmatism. Categorisation is necessary for developing a typology of systems and their functions, but nonetheless this is a pragmatic process. The unrecognised entity is treated as a new object, or as a continuum with the sovereign object. This results in the production of a *gestalt* understanding which incorporates a dogma of the ‘excluded middle’ in thinking on unrecognised entities. This excluded middle logic represents a

¹⁸ James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Global Interdependence* (London: Pinter, 1980), p. 301.

highly Aristotelian approach toward the object in question by adopting an either/or logic to develop an understanding of *de facto* states. In such an approach there are no grey areas – only black and white. The entity is either secessionist or it is not a *de facto* state and so on. This false logic has had powerful impact in terms of the development of gestalt models within the field. Sovereignty is also treated as a conceptual ‘whole’ far in excess of its actual attributes. Contrary to its gestalt significance in literature on *de facto* states, sovereignty has no magical essence - there is no biological destiny given by sovereignty. Therefore, to attempt to remove or separate unrecognised entities from the multiform complexities of the state system is poor and confused pedagogy. The same can be said for the gestalt understanding of secession in the *de facto* states model.

Josep Costa identified three broad theoretical groupings on secession which are useful for deconstructing the concept. He assembles these as: *National self-determination theories*, *Choice theories*, and ‘*Just-cause*’ theories.¹⁹ Costa argues that the *National self-determination* or ‘nationalist’ theories of secession are the best known as they make the most explicit association between the *nation* and the right to self-determination vis-à-vis the right to independent statehood. Costa also highlights a distinction between ‘derivative right’ and ‘basic right’ theories on secession, arguing that ‘the former appeal[s] to the fact that nationalism serves important values – such as social justice or democracy – whereas the latter stress the basic value of individual autonomy.’²⁰

These ‘nationalist’ theories, Costa argues, face three main challenges:

- 1) The impossibility of deciding which groups count as nations and who bears the right of self-determination.
- 2) There are more potential nations in the world than possible viable states.
- 3) The objection that the right of self-determination privileges national groups over other kinds of cultural groups or communities that are at least as important for the well-being of individuals.²¹

These challenges are particularly problematic due to the way in which many scholars have adopted a gestalt understanding or approach to the nation in their analysis of unrecognised states. The following extract illustrates this problem:

¹⁹ Josep Costa, ‘On Theories of Secession: Minorities, Majorities and the Multinational State,’ *CRISPP*, 6:2, (Summer 2003), p. 64.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

²¹ *Ibid.*

All nations in today's world are proclaimed as nation-states. Rightly or wrongly, state leaders invariably claim to represent their 'nation'. In a similar way, the leaders of [unrecognised] quasi-states speak on behalf of the Ossetian nation, the Somaliland people, the people of Dniestria, and so on. Like other states, they strenuously try to foster a sense of common identity and destiny among the inhabitants of the territory they control.²²

The projection of an essentialised, nationalist theory of secession in the work of scholars focusing on unrecognised entities in Eurasia and the Caucasus is very often coupled with a gestalt model of state-building which proposes that the construction of the nation is coterminous with the construction of the structural and ideological apparatus of the state. Kolstø's work tends to base such an argument on the hypothesis that the populations of unrecognised 'quasi-states' have been 'homogenized through population exchanges and ethnic cleansing that preceded or accompanied the secession.'²³ This national self-determination model of secession penetrates literature on unrecognised entities to such an extent that the gestalt image of a homogenised state, albeit unrecognised, renders more complicated ethno-political factors an insignificant abstraction. Endurance by any means following ethnic war and ethnic cleansing may be the dominant strategy pursued by unrecognised entities in many cases. However, it comes as little surprise that recognition and legitimacy remain in abeyance given the precedent set by this form of state building. Given the problem that there are more potential nations in the world than viable states, the model which emerges out of advocating the ethno-nationalist self-determination model, no matter how compelling, requires the broader acceptance of state break-up as a *just-cause*. The reluctance of international society to accept this model through its general opposition to the recognition of secessionist entities leaves a considerable quandary for the leaders of these pseudo-states.

Edward Walker describes this as a 'no peace, no war'²⁴ scenario, at the centre of which lies the reluctance of the international community to fast-track settlements on legal status in cases where a secessionist entity seeks to break away from a sovereign body. Walker implies that the 'no peace, no war' model is, in part, an outcome of the

²² Pål Kolstø, 'The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States,' *Journal of Peace Research*, 43:6 (2006), p. 730.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Edward, Walker, 'No Peace, No War in the Caucasus: Secessionist Conflicts in Chechnya, Abkhazia and Nagorno Karabakh'. Centre for Science and International Affairs, *Occasional Paper*, February 1998, Introduction.

international community's fear of 'promoting secessionist wars around the globe.'²⁵ Walker also suggests that 'having won on the battlefield but not at the negotiating table, the secessionists therefore find themselves in a state of "no peace, no war." This is not to say that the likelihood that "no peace, no war" will persist is equal between cases. On the contrary, the risks of both renewed fighting and opportunities for a political settlement vary considerably.'²⁶ Walker's model identifies a very important issue. The failure to gain recognition at the negotiating table persists as one of the more enigmatic issues within studies of unrecognized entities. Something about unrecognized entities, it seems, violates the basic conditions and conceptual frameworks on which international society negotiates legitimacy and status. Sovereign statehood is, therefore, not coterminous with secession unless successfully negotiated. As stated by Berg, entities 'behave as sovereign states *because other states allow them to do so*. By accepting them as equals they make recognition a pivotal element in the institution of sovereign statehood... it is not only facts that take the lead in formal recognition of the statehood but rather norms that create the facts.'²⁷

Given the ethno-political dynamics which underpin the desire for self-determination, and the numerous instances where self-determination has found its political articulation through secession, separatism, ethnic conflict and ethno-political mobilisation, the idea of an unrecognised entity existing as a world-unto-itself, subsisting independently of international society's relation to it, is an absurdity. At the theoretical level, unrecognised entities require a distinction to be made between legitimate and illegitimate units of organisation in the international system, but such distinctions become problematic if extended deeply into questions of form, function and composition. The whole issue of unrecognised state-like entities is intersubjective and lacks consensus, particularly when viewed through the lens of international norms. Secession and ethnic war are very closely linked regardless of the fact that not all self-determination movements or secessionist agendas are potential catalysts for ethnic conflict. Threats to the territorial delineation of the sovereign state are rarely, if ever, tolerated in the eyes of international society either before or after the act of secession, or in any of the other *post*

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Eiki Berg, 'Pooling Sovereignty, Losing Territoriality? Making Peace in Cyprus and Moldova', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 97:3, 2006, p. 228. Emphasis added.

facto forms which can emerge following state break up. This sanctity of the sovereign body, according to Weller, has led to a system which denies choice and harbours the potential to perpetuate conflict:

The international system has ‘balanced’ the competing aims of accommodating the ideology of free will against the purported aim of maintaining stability, order and peace... those who operate the system have ensured that the very doctrine of self-determination that purports to enfranchise people actually serves to disenfranchise them, in the interest of maintaining peace and stability. Rather than offering citizens a choice, the doctrine of self-determination has been constructed in a way that limits or denies choice. In fact, generally self-determination is a rule that empowers those who oppose choice, even by violent means, where the territorial definition of the state is concerned.²⁸

Weller’s argument is a pointed attack on a system which, rightly or wrongly, he sees as generating ‘a dynamic which sustains conflict.’²⁹ However Weller’s argument is strengthened by the potential for an autonomous entity to emerge out of the ‘free-choice’ option of self-determination into a ‘system’ which reinforces the indissoluble primacy of the *de jure* sovereign body. A wide range of studies into the problem of unrecognised entities are symptomatic of a preoccupation with ‘differences’ between entities – the illegitimate object defined in relation to its *de jure* signifier – to the extent of this approach becoming an orthodoxy within the literary canon on the subject. Comparative analysis of empirical data on unrecognised entities often attempts to innovate from this starting-point. Equally striking is the tendency of scholars to reify either the system of sovereignty or the illegitimate object exclusively, ignoring what Weller calls ‘the trap of self-determination’ – essentially, a stigma which accompanies secessionist aspiration, mobilisation, conflict and unrecognised status. As Weller argues:

...those who seek to assert their identity are forced into an absolute position... As the international system privileges the interest of the state over the position of groups challenging its territorial unity, most central governments feel under no pressure to accommodate demands for change... Compromise constitutional settlements that might maintain the unity of the state, while permitting a greater expression of diverse identities through the legal and political system, have therefore often been denied. Instead, the state will tend to label groups that agitate for a more pronounced identity secessionists and rebels. Under the cover of international rules, it will attempt to suppress them. However, in most instances, this has not led to a disappearance of the problem.³⁰

²⁸ Marc Weller, ‘The Self-Determination Trap’, *Ethnopolitics*, 4:1, March 2005, p. 4.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

If such a system as the one proposed by Weller acts as a force on the subsistence of unrecognised entities, it presents a quandary for advocates and opponents of secession alike. On the one hand it is possible that the rights-based approach to self-determination carries with it considerable force when negotiated in compliance with the norms of international convention; but on the other hand, the sanctity of territorial delineation and integrity opposes the utility of such strategies – regardless of how much territorial autonomy resides with an illegitimate territory and its governing regime. This is the system/object dualism which challenges gestalt models of secession and characterises many of the theoretical problems encountered in the study of unrecognised state-like entities.

Centrally Propelled Secession: A model for Iraq?

For all their various differences, scholars who adhere to the post-Cold War definition of the ‘unrecognised’ or ‘*de facto*’ state can be said to share one fundamental conviction: that the unrecognised state, existing independently of international norms concerning legitimacy and *de jure* sovereignty, is a *secessionist entity* or an articulation of secessionist antagonism, in a geo-political periphery, against a geo-political centre from which it seeks separation. This representation of secession is highly conventional and adopts a classical view of secession which is dominant in both public opinion and international relations. The *de facto* state is defined by Pegg as a ‘secessionist entity’ and this definition contains the precondition that the entity must be seeking to separate from a geo-political centre of some shape or form. In a great many ways the concept of the secessionist entity is the linchpin which holds the theoretical structures of unrecognised ‘states’, *de facto* ‘states’, and quasi- ‘states’ together. This focus on secession originating in an ethnic or territorial periphery is, in a sense, the reigning *doxa* of post-Cold War scholarship and philosophy on unrecognised state-like entities

Having argued throughout this thesis that these entities are not states or states ‘in all but name’, it is necessary to examine how the concept of the ‘secessionist entity’ is an impoverished abstraction whose meaning supervenes on a highly rigid and conventional representation of secession which has outlasted its utility. To refigure the meaning of secession (in the context of unrecognised entities) the following section will discuss Daniele Conversi’s analytical concept of *Central Secession* presented in his work

'Central Secession: towards a new analytical concept? The case of former Yugoslavia' (2000) in order to examine whether or not conceptual norms concerning secessionist entities are now challengeable; and whether or not Conversi's model aids and enhances our understanding of relations between the unitary government of Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan region. This will represent an analytical continuation of the preceding section's challenge to the gestalt understanding of secession which permeates literature on unrecognised entities. The analysis which follows does not intend to compare or contrast the former Yugoslavia with Iraq, but rather to evaluate Conversi's analytical concept of central secession in relation to unrecognised entities.

From the outset Conversi challenges the idea that all secession is of a 'peripheral' format (i.e. as originating in the ethno-political periphery and mobilising against the 'centre') and that in a small number of cases secession can be *propelled* by a dominant nationalist group which controls the geo-political 'centre' of power in order to achieve desired separation from peripheral components.³¹ This shift in emphasis from the periphery to the actions of the centre is a radical departure from conventional ethnocentric approaches to secession. Conversi takes as a point of departure the implicit assumption that *exit* originates in a peripheral movement, that this assumption is one of the defining tropes of secession in international politics ('In international politics the norm is 'peripheral secession', namely a movement developing somewhere in the ethno-territorial periphery and aimed against the centre.'³²), and that this portrayal of secession ignores the key role in the development of antagonism played by dominant nationalist groups in defining and promoting the act of separation in all its territorial and political manifestations. Conversi contends that in some cases the 'strongest input' leading to state break-up can originate from the dominant core once the imposition (or re-imposition) of hegemony becomes unfeasible. Conversi argues that, in the case of the former Yugoslavia:

Slobodan Milosevic and his circle opted for a project which, though cautiously disguised, in practice amounted to secessionism. Naturally, the unfolding of events led to a relationship between Belgrade's *crypto-secessionism* on the one hand, and

³¹ Daniele Conversi, 'Central Secession: towards a new analytical concept? The case of former Yugoslavia', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26:2, April 2000, pp. 333-355.

³² Ibid.

the more explicit secessionisms of Croatia and Slovenia on the other. Yet, I claim that the process was triggered in Belgrade.³³

Other peculiarities of 'central secession' are framed through the Yugoslav conflict:

One of the peculiarities of 'central secession' lies at the discursive level and warrants clarification here. By seizing the central state, the secessionists do not necessarily develop a secessionist vocabulary, and therefore can act from a secure under-the-table position. With this face-saving gimmick, their 'impunity' is granted. In the case of Yugoslavia, Belgrade's rhetoric throughout the conflict remained eminently 'unitarian'. This strategy was adopted by the nationalists in order both to preserve the international community's support for the regime and to enlist the unconditional assistance of the Yugoslav Army (JNA - *Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija*), which was the last remaining unitarian institution inherited from Tito's years.³⁴

The essence of Conversi's argument is that it is possible for the central state to secede from its periphery without adopting the rhetoric or discursive positions commonly associated with secessionist antagonism.

The aforementioned conceptual shift, proposed by Conversi, has far reaching implications for the study of unrecognised state-like entities. The archetype of the *de facto* state requires an entity to be explicitly secessionist. There exist other scholarly definitions of the secessionist *object* which require this intent to have been formally expressed and codified within rational frameworks of nation building and the consolidation of mechanisms of statecraft. Whilst these qualifications have done a great deal to marry empirical events in post-Soviet space and other regions with existing frameworks for understanding political mobilisation at the end of the Cold War, the overarching linearity of such approaches has produced a one-way flow model of secession which portrays the origins of secessionist antagonism as emerging in one (or more) peripheral locations and being targeted at the central (unitary) state.

If we superimpose this model onto the question of Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq we are left with a one-way cycle of Kurdish antagonism toward the unitary authorities as they attempt to pursue an ethno-nationalist, self-determination agenda. Such simplified models are easily falsified through the examination of enmities and corresponding actions by both sides of an ethno-political dispute. In the case of Iraq it is often assumed that the Kurds seek to break-away from the state. In fact the opposite can be argued given that in 1991 the Iraqi Government withdrew its forces and administrative

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

apparatus from most of what we now call Iraqi Kurdistan and then followed this action up by laying down an internal embargo against the Kurds in the north. Applying Conversi's model of 'central' or 'centrally propelled' secession to the actions of Saddam Hussein's government during this period, it becomes clear that the dominant national government (representing a dominant nationality) engaged in a project of withdrawal from northern Iraq triggered in Baghdad – not in the war-ravaged Kurdish north. It is argued here that this action amounted to a secession (or *crypto-secession*) by the government of Iraq which paved the way for the establishment of Kurdish controlled provinces in the north of the country. Unable to impose its hegemony over the entire country in the wake of defeat and coalition military intervention following the first Gulf War, the government of Iraq effectively seceded from component parts of its own territory. In this way the government of Iraq, it can be argued, set the precedent for the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish enclave (secessionist or not) in the north of the country. This is a point which does not appear to have been fully explored by Iraq specialists as subsequent Kurdish nationalist projects conducted in the north of the country are often framed in terms of peripheral antagonism toward the unitary authorities in Baghdad, despite the fact that Baghdad itself set the precedent for proactive Kurdish nation building in the early 1990s. This thesis contends that secession has *already* occurred in Iraq between the central authorities and the regional polities in Kurdistan. The problem is that it has not been recognised as such as it does not conform to the ethnocentric conventions and norms of international politics which demand that secession be directed toward the dominant centre. Whereas the normative view of peripheral secession is presumed to encompass antagonism toward the centre, the reverse is never assumed to be the case.

Conversi argues that the notion of a centrally propelled secession is essentially a 'missing concept' within political science. The position of the state in international theory is privileged by norms which cede little or no ground to the possibility of the unitary state opting to secede from components of its own territory. Conversi takes great care to emphasise that the occurrence of central secession is a rare event with very few examples present in history. Although rare, Conversi contends 'they can happen when the dominant group perceives a feeling of threat and is invested by revanchist and self-

victimising nationalism.³⁵ The embarrassing rout of his armed forces in the first Gulf war caused Saddam grave concern over the legitimacy of his regime and the assertion of Ba'athist hegemony across the state.³⁶ It can be argued that for pragmatic reasons Saddam withdrew his forces from Kurdistan in order to focus on keeping control of core territories and to maintain regime survival. This withdrawal, combined with the UN Security Council Resolution 688 authorising humanitarian assistance to the Kurds, re-drew the political map of Iraq as now the Ba'ath government's writ did not run in several of its northern provinces:

Saddam, content that the Kurds had been stopped from threatening to secede from the state and aware that the international community at large, and Turkey and the US in particular, had no desire to see them independent of Iraq, withdrew his forces from Kurdistan. His motives were pragmatic as he recognised that his forces would be needed to ensure that his regime remained well defended in Baghdad in critical months to come, and he also needed to have them available in case the Shi'i rebelled again.³⁷

Saddam's withdrawal of his military forces and administrative apparatus from Kurdistan enabled a Kurdish political consolidation which would otherwise have been unimaginable under the constant threat of oppression and retribution from Iraqi forces. No matter how effective the Kurdish insurgency in the north had already been in destabilising and weakening Saddam's force projection, without the centralised decision to withdraw military forces from Kurdistan, and a lack of outside support for an independent Kurdistan, subsequent political development inside Kurdistan would have required a radically different set of contingencies.

It is crucial to understand that Conversi's analytical of *central secession* operates at the discursive level and is just as much about the management of hegemony as it is about the re-drawing of *de jure* covenants underscoring the shape and function of a unitary state. Critics of Conversi's analytical concept could put forward the argument that the analytical concept of central secession is counterintuitive and radically contradicts conventional wisdom on the ethnic and territorial facets of state break-up. However, central secession operates at the same level of causation, necessity and contingency as more common ethno-political disputes. It can be argued that the spectrum of secession is situated on a continuum whereby the pragmatic drive to secede can be just

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 334-5

³⁶ See Gareth Stansfield, *Iraq* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), pp. 129-130

³⁷ Ibid., p. 135

as advantageous (in terms of payoffs) to the centre as it is to the periphery. The same can be said for the risks involved as well. Saddam could withdraw from Kurdistan without adopting the rhetoric or vocabulary of secession. As Conversi points out, this enables the project of a central secession to be conducted from a 'secure under-the-table position', and with 'this face-saving gimmick their 'impunity' is granted.'³⁸ It is also important to modify our understanding of the 'disintegrative push' usually associated with dissolution of states and the post-facto emergence of secession. In the case of Saddam's withdrawal from Kurdistan, the ethnic antagonism necessary to forge one of the key weapons in the secessionist arsenal (from a Kurdish perspective) was the ever present legacy of genocide. Thus the antagonism directed toward the central authorities can be framed in a traditional periphery vs. centre model. However the Kurds were not pursuing an overtly dissolutionist, irredentist, revanchist, or secessionist campaign against Baghdad. Therefore, the effect of Saddam's withdrawal from Kurdistan and subsequent internal embargo, was to remove *de facto* control and administration of Kurdistan from the remit of Baghdad, handing it over to the UN and Kurdish political factions, but retaining control of the *de jure* title to Kurdistan as part of a unitary Iraq and not an independent state. However the flaw in this example of *crypto-secessionism* is that the central authorities in Baghdad would never regain *de facto* political control of Kurdistan.

There is, however, a problem with the direct application of Conversi's conceptual model in the Iraqi example. The assertion in this discussion that a form of *centrally propelled* secession occurred in Iraq around the end of the first Gulf War is tempered by recognising that Iraq still exists as a unitary state and that no *post facto* secession has occurred in such a way as to alter the cartography of the Iraqi state. Instead, what is argued is the possibility that a form of *crypto-secessionist* project was undertaken by Saddam for reasons of pragmatism and political expediency. To understand how such a manoeuvre is possible (tactically or strategically) it is necessary to avoid the literal and rigid interpretations ascribed to the concept of secession in international law, but rather to flux and bend the concept in ways which better explain why a central regime can renounce control (by way of its actions) over the entirety of its own territory, thereby propelling the feasibility of independence, autonomy and self-determination in a political

³⁸ Conversi, Op. Cit., p. 334

periphery such as Kurdistan. Such events appear unique in international politics with little comparability between examples.

Conversi puts forward the theoretical notion that a core ethno-national or ideological component of a state (the 'centre') may opt to relinquish control over part of its own territory in order to solve 'financial and political disputes' and get rid of burdens by allowing secession rather than conceding more autonomy.³⁹ In Iraq's case we have more of a retreat of central authority than a *de facto* secession, but nonetheless it can be argued that Saddam's strategy was more an abandonment or relinquishment of the projection of Ba'athist hegemony in order to get rid of political burdens and drains on his military resources which would be better placed elsewhere. Thus, the strict application of Conversi's concept of a *centrally propelled* secession is something of a misnomer in the case of Iraq. However, what was historically seen in the Iraqi example is a form of closely related *crypto-secession* which is perhaps better explained in terms of the 'ejection'⁴⁰ of Iraqi Kurdistan from the rest of the Iraqi state. In the absence of *post facto* secession by a dominant nationalist core (a factor Conversi uses to limit the definition of 'secessionism by the centre') Saddam's actions represented the ejection of a peripheral component of his own territory, thus making autonomy *fait accompli* for the Kurds and their political parties. The motivations for such actions are highly complex and the nearest we come to understanding them through Conversi's model is through the notion of pragmatic and secretive *crypto-secessionism* given the withdrawal of the dominant centre from a peripheral territory in the Iraqi example. It is, however, far from an exact match with Conversi's analytical concept given the rarity of central secessions in international politics.⁴¹ Conversi's concept of central secession may become more relevant in the setting of Iraqi politics depending whether or not the country witnesses the re-emergence of a strong ethno-nationalist core who seek a symbolic split with, or secession from, the Kurdistan region (or vice versa).

The analytical concept of 'secessionism by the centre' is important to the study of unrecognised entities for the way in which it destabilises the now rigid assumption that peripheral ethno-political antagonisms are always the secessionist precursor in the chain

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 336-7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 338.

⁴¹ Ibid.

of events leading up to state break-up. Conversi's concept equally destabilises the assumption that secession is always directed at the centre from the periphery by way of antagonism, anti-constitutionalism, ethnicism and irredentism⁴², factors which Conversi identifies as central to Caney's widely accepted and reproduced definition of secession which encompasses it as 'a territorial community's breakaway from its erstwhile host state and the founding of its own separate and politically sovereign entity.'⁴³ Caney's definition of secession is exemplary of the subjective bias which has allowed scholars like Pegg to assert that unrecognised entities must have intrinsic secessionist properties of their own (i.e., the qualification of secessionist intent and the pursuit of political sovereignty) which are established upon linear 'periphery versus centre' notions of political mobilisation which do not contain space for analytical concepts such as the 'secessionism by the centre' proposed by Conversi. As can be seen in the example provided by the relationship between Iraqi Kurdistan and the rest of metropolitan Iraq, there are so many shades of grey governing relations between groups in these situations that the need for an intersubjective consensus on the defining theoretical qualities of unrecognised entities becomes increasingly irrelevant.

In the search for a logically consistent narrative of the emergence and function of unrecognised entities in international politics, there has not yet been a theoretical admission of the complexity and sheer unpredictability of how secession manifests and functions in the dynamic relations between unrecognised entities and their parent states. In this regard it is particularly hopeless to attempt to impose theoretical uniformity on such a nebulous analytical concept through the simple distillation of empirically observable attributes and qualities (such as the focus on secessionist intent in Pegg's definition). Inevitably, continuous change in international politics harbours unlimited potential to contradict, falsify and destabilise predictive narratives emerging from scholarly enquiry into these issues. It can be argued, therefore, that a culture of pastiche exists within political science and international relations on the question of illegitimate and unrecognised state-like entities. The concept has not been problematised to a level where analytical concepts (such as those put forward by Conversi) are given due

⁴² Ibid., p. 334.

⁴³ Conversi takes this definition from Caney, S. 'National self-determination and national secession: individualist and communitarian approaches', in P. Lehning (Ed.), *Theories of Secession* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 152-3.

theoretical consideration. Scholars dedicated to researching these entities have tacitly constructed a repository for generalisations and value judgements within the canon of literature dedicated to the object of study. A situation which has stunted enquiry into the theoretical problems and challenges associated with the emergence and subsequent functioning of unrecognised state-like territories and the radically different manifestations of political development and mobilisation they represent.

Iraqi Kurdistan's political example urges us to reappraise secession as an analytical concept. Iraqi Kurdistan's geographical presence did not arise as a constitutional or remedial right, nor was it cartographically fashioned out of a partition. The situation is additionally complicated by the fact that although strong Kurdish nationalist political movements exist on Iraqi soil, the call for any form of secession from the rest of Iraq remains highly tempered and muted by the Kurds' new-found centrality in Iraqi politics and the role of key Kurdish political leaders as Iraqi statesmen since 2003. The constitutional reabsorption of the Kurdistan region after decades of warfare and sanctions should not be mistaken for rehabilitation of the region into the centralised apparatus of a unitary Iraq. The KRG and Kurdish political parties possess a unique and potent autonomy within the federal and constitutional arrangements of Iraq following the war in 2003. This situation is in no small measure a legacy of events which occurred following the first Gulf War. For this reason the actions of Saddam's government at this time need to be analysed theoretically in terms of their impact on political space and how the withdrawal of state apparatus (military, economic and administrative) conferred a long-lasting autonomy and semi-sovereignty to Kurdish groups which has matured into the rudiments of pluralistic governance and military self-sufficiency. One only has to compare the political and administrative effectiveness of the Kurdish administration with similar regimes in other unrecognised entities to realise that Iraqi Kurdistan has achieved more in terms of holistic political development and governance than other entities which, in many cases, possess greater *de facto* territorial independence from their parent states.

A crucial factor in Iraqi Kurdistan's development is the way in which it was disenfranchised (or disengaged) from the rest of Iraq following the first Gulf War. This is not to say that political affairs between the Kurds and Saddam's government came to an end, or that the Kurds in their northern enclave were somehow insulated from all the actions of Baghdad during this period. Saddam's actions were instrumental in creating

the necessary conditions for enduring Kurdish autonomy in the north of Iraq. His actions should in no way be seen as intentionally giving advantage to the Kurds but rather the fact that he withdrew his military from the Kurdistan region in 1991 suggests regime survival was uppermost in his mind. It should also be recognised that the Kurds, whilst fighting an insurgency against Saddam's forces at the end of the first Gulf War, were severely weakened after years of brutal military campaigns conducted by Saddam's military. The ceasefire and withdrawal of Saddam's forces to areas outside what then became a UN safe haven allowed for the political rehabilitation of Kurdish politics, the consolidation of political and territorial autonomy and the creation of autonomous structures which although not recognised, sovereign or extremely powerful, nevertheless had the power to endure. The process of rehabilitation and consolidation was far from smooth with intra-Kurdish fighting occurring sporadically throughout the 1990s until the main political parties could agree on power-sharing and the administration of a region which contained numerous competing spheres of socio-political influence.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined how the concepts of sovereignty and secession have been used within literature on unrecognised entities and how analytical approaches to secession greatly influenced the formation of theoretical conventions which are used to define the phenomena of unrecognised "states" in the literature. Research into unrecognised entities is, in some respects a new field of inquiry and the body of literature emerging from it remains very small. Although analysis of regional security issues associated with the emergence of break-away republics following ethnic and intrastate conflict has achieved a higher profile within international relations and political science research, the discursive conventions developed in early literature on *de facto* states remains the benchmark for describing and articulating the problem in question. Accordingly, the same discursive language and argument surfaces repeatedly concerning the status and physical attributes of unrecognised entities, even in texts which purportedly challenge prior frameworks.

State centric approaches based on status in an international system dominated by sovereign bodies heavily influenced the theoretical frameworks of early literature on the subject. Equally, emphasis on those covenants of interaction between states which

prevent ethno-political movements from gaining recognition led to analysis which emphasised the perfunctory position of unrecognised entities largely at the expense of a more nuanced reading of the political mechanisms employed by actors within entities to maintain power despite their asymmetric position and lack of international backing. Due to the small body of literature, generalisations and continuity of assumption between texts is easily discernable. It is also easy to identify the discursive legacy of early works in subsequent texts due the repetition and reproduction of core conceptual frameworks. It is very difficult, however, to conduct research into unrecognised entities without recourse to three problematic constructs identified within this chapter. These problems are now outlined in terms of their significance for future research.

Firstly (and perhaps most significantly in terms of the potency of subsequent issues) is the danger of adopting and recreating an objectified discourse. All works in the literature deal with the unrecognised “state” as an object which can be defined in terms of geographical size, fixity of population, levels of representative government, and a list of *inabilities* such as lack of access to diplomatic channels. Whilst, these properties deal with formal practicalities necessary to situate the phenomenon within the analytical frameworks of international relations and comparative politics, they do not provide a convincing theoretical model for exploring the many unanswered questions which endure. In sum, if we focus our analytical efforts too greatly on the task of decoding the objective status of unrecognised entities, we attribute wholeness and a political rationale to the concept which is questionable given the range of empirical phenomena which suggest such entities are less state-like than mainstream discourse claims. Whilst it is very difficult to develop approaches which avoid the employment of a *gestalt* understanding of unrecognised entities, it is no less problematic to adopt an oxymoronic position which discursively positions these phenomena as unrecognised ‘states’ or ‘states in all but name’. It has been argued that to remain illegitimate in perpetuity as an unrecognised entity indicates the presence of a paradigm within international society (as yet undefined) which is not adequately explained through the mores of statecraft and the covenants of a metaphorical ‘club’ of states from which autonomy movements find themselves excluded.

Secondly, whilst the concept can be said to represent the keystone of all literature on unrecognised entities, secession has not been adequately theorised in ways which

deliver a better understanding of its subtleties and the complex political dialogues which surround it. Again we see repeated in the literature a classical top-down analysis of secession which reifies the position of the state. The analytical concept of the *de facto* state is defined by Scott Pegg as a ‘secessionist entity’ which loosely implies that such entities challenge formalised territorial arrangements. However, the perpetual state of non-recognition experienced by many of these entities, often as a result of political and military stalemates, and accommodation by means of increased incorporation into the fabric of regional negotiations, indicate that the way the concept of secession has been employed within literature on unrecognised entities is an extension of the objectified discourse generated in early works. This discourse has not adequately historicised the concept of secession or whether early works which employed the concept as part of key criteria gave necessary latitude and depth for the inclusion of potentially deviant cases. Unfortunately, researchers continue to view these phenomena as unitary actors pursuing unitary agendas of separatism and secession despite contradictory dynamics which hint at the presence of other processes, incentives, and motivations.

This chapter highlights the falsity of this perspective and sees in it a problematic legacy for future research. Not all unrecognised entities are pursuing a separatist or secessionist agenda (as the case of Iraqi Kurdistan shows) and this raises urgent questions over the suitability and applicability of conceptual definitions and terms (such as the “*De Facto State*”) in popular usage by researchers. Perhaps most destabilising to current conceptualisations of secession within the literature is the question of historical dialogue between the centralised state apparatus and those who seek autonomy or complete removal from its aegis. The state centric argument that it is always the periphery which seeks to detach itself from the power of the centre is not a discursive position which allows space for contradictory cases. By putting forward the possibility that in some cases it may be the central state apparatus which seeks to remove itself from relations with a territorial component of its own ethno-political make-up, this chapter introduced a controversial but nonetheless significant alternative which, on the one hand, partly explains the nature of political development in northern Iraq following the first Gulf war, and on the other, challenges the conventional discourse on secession proposed in existing literature on unrecognised entities. The next chapter examines the potential for the development of new analytical approaches to the issue of unrecognised state-like entities

in the international system in the light of an increasing awareness among analysts and researchers that existing frameworks may be outmoded and/or obsolete.

7. The End of “De Facto States”? Toward An Alternative Model for Research into Unrecognised Entities

For many years, discussions surrounding unrecognised entities have emphasised a synthesis between *de facto* independence, on the one hand, and the secessionist aspiration for *de jure* independence on the other. Full statehood, international recognition, the right to self-determination (remedial or otherwise), and ‘earned sovereignty’ - as ideological and aspirational commodities accompanying claims to independence - became the dominant theoretical focus for scholars and analysts for almost two decades regardless of the lack of a consensus on how such broadly generalised schema applied to evolving realities in each case. Despite the ever present problem of theoretical inertia and case exclusivity when dealing with unrecognised entities, the tendency to resort to earlier conceptual and analytical conventions for purposes of generalisation has not only been widespread, but has left a legacy of obsolete terminology, definitions and problematic theoretical models for future researchers.

The future of this field of research is equally uncertain as new analysis of secession, autonomy, and unrecognised entities will be forced to move away from the conventional modalities of the *de facto* independent *secessionist* entity in response to evolving realities such as those exhibited in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Iraqi Kurdistan which resist generalisation and designation through existing conceptual archetypes. This section expands and builds on analysis presented in the preceding chapter, and examines contemporary concerns which can only be addressed by challenging existing frameworks for understanding unrecognised entities. It identifies several ongoing issues which compel a review of the analytical concept of the “*de facto* state” and proposes a shift toward a more flexible, case oriented set of conceptual criteria for future analysis and research.

The End of “De Facto States”

In July 2009, Nicu Popescu, a research fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), published a short commentary on secessionist entities and *de facto*

states entitled *The End of “De Facto States”*¹ in which the author argued that events in the Caucasus, notably political developments in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, made the term “*De Facto States*” increasingly obsolete and outmoded. Although only a few paragraphs in length, Popescu’s timely commentary highlighted the urgent need for a review of the suitability of terminology which has been used to generalise the position of unrecognised entities in the international system. Popescu’s analysis represents a long overdue reinvigoration of debates and discussions surrounding the tendency, as argued in the preceding chapter, for state-like systems to be categorised and reduced to convenient conceptual packages which are then applied across all cases. The prime example of this being the tendency of analysts and researchers to adopt and deploy the term *de facto* state in order to create a *gestalt* symbolism regarding the existence of secessionist, state-like entities which are unrecognised by international society but remain *de facto* independent in an unrequited “quest” for sovereignty.

The keystone of Popescu’s commentary is that in the examples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia we are witnessing the loss, or willing surrender, of these unrecognised entities’ *de facto* independence in response to evolving realities on the ground. This loss of *de facto* independence is framed as evidence of the complex interplay between unrecognised entities and the sovereign powers which surround them; and is an indication of how problematic the maintenance of pre-sovereign equilibrium is for entities that are unrecognised, militarily weak, and exist in a state of extreme asymmetry when compared with the strong military capabilities of the sovereign states nearest to them, or of which they previously formed a territorial component. Whilst the term *de facto* state was a convenient title for these entities after the debate was launched by Scott Pegg in the late 1990s, Popescu argues against this definition in the light of contemporary developments. He writes:

The truth is of course more complicated because most “de facto” states have always relied on various levels of external support to ensure their security and/or economic development (think of Taiwan, North Cyprus or Abkhazia). So the term *has always been relative*. Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria have *outsourced* a large chunk of their *de facto* independence to Russia: their borders have been *de facto* guarded by Russian peacekeepers, the Russian rouble was the official currency of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Transnistria has its own currency), some functions in

¹ Nicu Popescu, “The End of “De Facto States””, EU Observer Blog, 13th July 2009, http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_the_end_of_de_facto_states/, (Accessed 14th December 2010).

the *de facto* governments (especially in South Ossetia) have been outsourced to Russia etc. There has always [been] a large degree of “*de facto* integration” of Abkhazia and South Ossetia into Russia which was limiting their claims of being “*de facto* independent”. *And still they were accepted by most analysts as “de facto states”*. But the Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is accelerating the loss of their “*de facto* independence” if not by will, then by default.²

In 2006, Pål Kolstø argued that reabsorption into the parent state and inclusion into the parent state as a separate entity represented ‘Possible Ends to Quasi-States’³. However, in Kolstø’s paper, these outcomes were portrayed as very much a top-down outcome imposed, by force if necessary, by the patron state upon a militarily and economically inferior unrecognised entity. The difference between Kolstø’s contentions and the argument put forward by Popescu in the preceding extract is that Popescu highlights the potential (or option) for unrecognised entities to willingly gravitate toward the restoration of equilibrium relations with the patron state out of expediency.

The potential for trends of expedient decision-making to destabilise common assumptions regarding *de facto* states is now enormous, even if such trends are exhibited in only in a few cases. In the great majority of works focused on analysing *de facto* states, relations between the entity in question and the parent state are overwhelmingly centred around secessionist conflict, ethnic enmity, and the pursuit of full independence. This model of secession and the creation of new states may have appeared appropriate for the context of emerging unrecognised entities and secessionist conflicts at the end of the Cold War, but following a nearly two decades of stagnation in which only the example of Kosovo has symbolised the attainment of partial - yet controversial - independence, the ideological goal of achieving *de jure* recognition has never been so unattainable for unrecognised entities, and the creation of new states in the international system has never been more controversial or less appetising for sovereign powers.

Popescu’s observations on the loss of *de facto* independence in the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia offer us a timely reappraisal of the fragile and unstable political foundations upon which unrecognised entities often have to build their case for secession and independence. It cannot be said that at any one point in the historical continuum, these entities existed in conditions favourable to secession and the creation of

² Ibid. Emphasis added.

³ Pål Kolstø, ‘The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States’, *Journal of Peace Research*, 43:6, 2006, pp. 734-738.

new states due to their inherent military weakness, unfeasible economies, lack of eternal support, and continuing status as zones of conflict. Clearly, if Abkhazia and South Ossetia have gravitated toward integrative relations with Russia, at the expense of *de facto* independence and administrative autonomy, it can be argued that these unrecognised entities had little incentive to press ahead with the type of separatist agenda so commonly portrayed as a feature of *de facto* statehood. Popescu writes:

The paradox is that until August 2008 Abkhazia and South Ossetia were unrecognised, but *de facto* independent; after August 2008 they became partly recognised, but not *de facto* independent anymore. If secessionist wars of 1992-1993 were their “wars for independence”, the August 2008 war is becoming the war that marked the loss of (their however limited) “*de facto* independence”. The 2008 [war] was won by Russia, not the secessionist entities. Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are quickly evolving from being “*de facto* states” to becoming “*de facto* Russian Regions”. Most South Ossetians welcome that, but the Abkhaz are more ambivalent... a recent statement by Abkhaz opposition activists argues that “all the functions that ensure the sovereignty and independence of our state are ceded to an external party”. One can agree or not with such a statement, but such a debate in Abkhazia is taking place. Either way, *the trend towards de facto integration into Russia is near inevitable and near irreversible*, for at least a couple of decades.⁴

If, as argued in the extract above, we are witnessing the emergence of processes of detachment and absorption into patron states as a contemporary trend in the political development of unrecognised entities, then again the appropriateness of the term *de facto* state is brought into question. Secessionist agendas, fixed populations, geographic boundaries, and a desire for legal recognition in international law are no longer suitable criteria for a fixed definition of these phenomena (in conceptual usage) given that in some cases the *de facto* state is in retreat and may exist more in the ethno-nationalist imagination than it does in actuality given evolving realities on the ground. The inflexibility of analytical and conceptual discourses, within in the field of research into unrecognised entities, has become ever more noticeable given the ongoing reluctance to develop alternatives to the *gestalt* state-centric proposals of the past two decades. We shall now turn our attention toward alternative ways of operationalising the concept of ‘*de facto* independence’ in light of the increasing anachronism associated with using the term *de facto* state in contemporary analysis and discourse.

⁴ Popescu, Op. Cit. (Emphasis added)

De Facto Independence as an Expedient Political Methodology

One of the major problems encountered when using the term *unrecognised entity* is the issue of depoliticisation. On a number of occasions the simple honesty of the term and its generic utility have provoked controversy in discussions with other analysts due to the potential for the term to depoliticise the physical (territorial) gains of political movements. This is intentional in so far as the term has been deployed within this thesis to enhance comparative theoretical discussions on an object which is heavily laden with political symbolism – political symbolism which often obscures deeper theoretical and conceptual debates on the fundamental nature of unrecognised entities as ethno-political mobilisation and organisation. The term *unrecognised entity* also has the potential to remove symbolic furniture associated with ethno-secessionist independence seeking and the creation of new ethno-national enclaves as it places emphasis on lack of recognition vis-à-vis *de facto* independence; and ambiguity of status vis-à-vis the parameters of these entities in international society. To this end, the term allows the theorist to step beyond the fixed meanings and terminological derivatives associated with the use of the term ‘*de facto* state’ in earlier discourses. By depoliticising the object of study, *unrecognised entity* is a term which also lessens the chance of advertent or inadvertent advocacy of statehood as a prize or potential gain from ethnic conflict; a scenario evidenced by the rhetorical and polemical usage of the term *de facto* state by separatist movements themselves. The term also avoids pitfalls of ethnocentric alterity such as that found in the discursive output of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO) in their ideological and polemical expositions on the artificiality of the modern nation state vs. the authenticity of ethnicity.⁵

Is the term ‘*de facto* state’ any less vague than its alternatives? Is describing these phenomena as *unrecognised entities* too obscure and vague for reasonable discussion? Both of these questions are misleading in the sense that the terms ‘*de facto* state’ and *unrecognised entity* represent abstract summaries of relations between these objects/actors and contemporary discourses and narratives of order in the international system. This relationship between concept and discourse explains why discussions on

⁵ For examples see the “UNPO Declaration on De Facto States / Opening the World Order to De Facto States” on the UNPO website: <http://www.unpo.org/content/view/8144/244/>. (Accessed 18th January 2010)

unrecognised entities have remained beset with problems of definition and typology from the very outset of the debate.

A problem which has been overlooked by analysts searching for a method to refine and modify the analytical concept of the *de facto* state is the reality that different discourses on international relations, statecraft, ethno-politics, ethno-nationalism, secession, separatism, conflict, rights, human geography, geopolitics, political science, political economy, international law, and many additional perspectives, demand analytical and theoretical nuances specific to each perspective which then determine the suitability and applicability of a particular definition. The “one-size-fits-all” approach to pre-sovereign predicaments, as contained within Pegg’s term ‘*de facto* state’, inhibits the development of flexible theoretical frameworks which can cater for the requirements of diverse interdisciplinary analyses. The term ‘quasi-state’ developed by Pål Kolstø is also problematic due to an equal level of generalisation across all cases. If these terms are deployed outside of their original area studies and international relations meanings, theoretical concessions have to be made which involve a compromise between discipline-specific frameworks and the accommodation of a controversial and unstable consensus on *de facto* states. This tenuous (if not illusory) consensus surrounding *de facto* states is the legacy of an extremely lean body of theoretical work which has not received sufficient scrutiny from an interdisciplinary standpoint. It is, therefore, very easy to highlight theoretical difficulties which emerge once the attempt is made to define and produce a *gestalt* “image” of these entities which generalises across cases.

The temporary, transient and nebulous character of *de facto* independence is a key variable hinted at within Popescu’s analysis and is one which deserves far greater attention than it has so far received. As a *corpus* study dealing with a specific debate in academic literature over the period between 1991 and the present, this thesis identifies analysis of the changing levels of autonomy and independence experienced by unrecognised entities over time as one of the main intertextual gaps in the production of knowledge within the field. As the *de facto* independence of some unrecognised entities is cast into doubt, the theoretical gap widens between evolving realities and an academic discourse which requires modification. The following sections identify three key theoretical concerns which have not been explored in contemporary analysis of *de facto*

independence as a medium- to long-term phase following secession or administrative separation:

1) De Facto Independence as a Long-Term Equilibrium Outcome

It can be argued that *de facto* independence represents, in some cases, a long-term, post-conflict equilibrium outcome between actors which does not always have to be representative of a precursor phase for becoming fully sovereign and achieving *de jure* recognition in international law. The reason for this can be twofold. Firstly, the act of seceding and establishing an independent entity which is viable over the long term may not be possible due to disequilibrium (or a lack of balanced interests) between actors within the unrecognised entity itself. Building and maintaining coalitions in a post-conflict situation are incredibly lengthy and complex processes; and the tendency for actors to engage in further contests, instead of entering into universal agreements, can be an ever present source of instability within unrecognised entities. Add to this the pressures of managing the process of seceding from a metropolitan state (often to a position of relative isolation) and the fragility of that independence which sustains unrecognised entities becomes apparent. *De facto* independence is, therefore, no guarantee of equilibrium relations between actors within unrecognised entities. It is not a reliable measure of an entity's capacity for statehood, and does not represent a preliminary or precursor phase to full sovereignty.

Secondly, the utility of *de facto* independence and formalised secession may not be the same for all actors within the unrecognised entity. Politically, there is little incentive for individual actors to enter into coalitions for the purposes of seceding if there is the threat of collapse through isolation, or military intervention from more powerful regional actors. Having gained *de facto* independence as a post-conflict outcome (either through direct or *centrally propelled* secession), such a period of equilibrium can be used to formalise relations with regional patrons and proximate ethno-political guarantors rather than being used as a platform to strike out on the lonely road to full legal recognition. As a strategy, *de facto* independence can be used to gravitate from one balance of geopolitical power to a different status quo. As seen in the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the attainment of their *de facto* independence has led to the enhanced influence of Russia in the Caucasus and a retreat from full independence by the

unrecognised entities themselves. *De facto* independence may, therefore, in certain situations, represent a temporary phase as asymmetric negotiations take place to ensure the long-term interests of actors inside the unrecognised entity are protected. This may ultimately result in incorporation or reabsorption into the political structures of patron and guarantor states surrounding the secessionist entity.

In the case of three unrecognised entities of the South Caucasus (Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia) the post-conflict equilibrium has been a product of secession rather than effective state building. The wars of secession which enabled *de facto* independence to be achieved were often won at the expense of economic viability and transparency. Kolstø and Blakkisrud emphasise that ‘quasi-states’ experience a post-secession predicament of marginalisation which can result in economic maldevelopment. As they point out:

[...] quasi-states suffer from what Scott Pegg (1998, p. 43) has called ‘the economic cost of non-recognition’: the states from which they have seceded will often be able to impose an embargo on trade with the breakaway region, and foreign investors will be wary of dealing with the separatists, lest they find themselves barred from the normally larger market of the metropolitan state. Finally, since quasi-states are not officially recognised, no international conventions can be applied on their territory, and no effective monitoring by international organisations is possible. The resultant lack of transparency in these states can prove extremely attractive for criminal and other semi-legal businesses.⁶

As a post-conflict equilibrium, *de facto* independence for unrecognised entities incorporates problematic economic ecologies associated with lack of recognition and the ability of regional actors to stymie the development of economic policy and economic independence. Whilst such realities cannot be generalised across all cases, most unrecognised entities endure complex, and often fraught, economic relations with their parent states and surrounding regional actors. The support of a patron or military guarantor in such circumstances is often of the utmost importance for the long-term survival of the entity. Iraqi Kurdistan is unique among unrecognised entities in its ability to bargain from positions of influence on both resource policy and security affairs inside Iraq, as well as possessing considerable leverage within the fabric of state government. This relative integration into the governmental and economic fabric of post-2003 Iraq has

⁶ Pål Kolstø and Helge Blakkisrud, ‘Living with Non-recognition: State- and Nation-building in South Caucasian Quasi-States’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60:3, May 2008, p. 505.

enabled the Kurds to establish and maintain an unrecognised entity in a manner which circumvents the need for a proximate patron state to ensure its survival. The post-conflict equilibrium experienced in Iraqi Kurdistan has not contributed toward further self-isolation as is arguably the case in other unrecognised entities that experience *de facto* independence. Popescu argues that this has been the case in Abkhazia and South Ossetia:

[...] Abkhazia and South Ossetia also contribute to their own self-isolation by refusing many international contacts for symbolic reasons (such as refusing to let the EU Monitoring Mission on their territories, or refusing to meet EU ambassadors to Georgia because they are ambassadors “to Georgia”). Such trends are hardly in the long-term interests of any of the actors in the conflict, but they are the result of previous policy choices made by all these actors themselves.⁷

From these observations and arguments we see that the influence of *de facto* independence varies widely in terms of its correlation with the policy choices and decisions which are made by actors in these conflicts and disputes. Actors in some unrecognised entities (such as Iraqi Kurdistan) are in a far stronger position to consolidate the post-conflict equilibrium; others (such as South Ossetia) operate in far more unfavourable regional conditions and expose themselves to isolation and maldevelopment as a side-effect of pursuing *de facto* independence. In the latter case this can lead to increased reliance on the economic and military support of an external patron – a situation which is often sustained at the expense of economic and administrative autonomy in the long-term.

De facto independence, therefore, is not sufficiently generalisable across all cases unless it is taken as a purely symbolic average which defines an equilibrium outcome which is achieved *when a secessionist entity experiences long-term balance of interests between its independence and the interests and influences of the sovereign actors which surround it*. Within this definition of *de facto* independence there is sufficient breadth to accommodate a plethora of differences between cases. This definition also allows researchers to build theoretical departures from the thesis that unrecognised entities must be pursuing *de jure* sovereignty by virtue of their physical presence in the international system. For example, if we view this form of independence as an equilibrium point between the interests of regional actors, we can analyse the policy choices which lead to

⁷ Popescu, Op. Cit.

the loss of *de facto* independence as a further continuation of the complex dialogue which occurs between sovereign states, unrecognised entities, and international actors. In certain cases, the move away from the pursuit of full sovereignty may be the optimum strategy for an unrecognised entity. *De facto* independence allows such choices to be made as there is no rule which demands that full sovereignty has to be the next phase in an unrecognised entity's development. As such it does not represent a substitute for sovereignty. This forms the basis of the second conjecture presented here.

2) De Facto Independence as a Sovereignty Substitute

De facto independence is a poor substitute for sovereignty. If we take the concept of sovereignty at its most basic level – a political community's right to juridical independence, *de facto* autonomy, and existence without being subject to external authority – it is theoretically clear that the benefits of sovereignty do not extend to unrecognised entities that only possess *de facto* independence. Whilst the effect of non-recognition upon unrecognised entities has been the subject of thorough discussion within the field, what has not been thoroughly analysed is the effect of being *de facto* independent in a predicament of unattainable or improbable sovereignty. Let us assume that the attainment of full independence and sovereignty is one of the ideological factors underpinning secessionist conflicts which create “facts on the ground” such as unrecognised entities and autonomous enclaves outside the control of the metropolitan authorities. Depending on the variations of each case, if the attainment of full sovereignty is unlikely to materialise as an equilibrium outcome over the long-term, *de facto* independence is likely to represent a frozen image of ethno-political processes which were previously more dynamic. This may indicate a shift away from expending resources on conflict toward trends of rent seeking by actors within unrecognised entities whose cooperative / non-cooperative interests lie outside the pursuit of creating a sovereign entity.

Whilst the “idea” of creating the sovereign state may endure in the ideological rhetoric of political actors within unrecognised entities, quite often the policy responses enacted by the very same actors show a distinct lack of commitment to the practical pursuit of *de jure* statehood. Iraqi Kurdistan is a good case in point. Whilst the notion of an independent Kurdish homeland is a mainstay of Kurdish nationalism, political figures

in Iraqi Kurdistan take great care not to associate the *de facto* independence of their unrecognised entity with the creation of a *de jure* Kurdish state in northern Iraq. The problem for researchers encountering such paradigms is how to interpret the parameters of independence and internal sovereignty in each case. This is a huge problem as we are not talking about independence in a familiar, historical sense which has been widely analysed and documented. Instead we are tasked with developing theoretical models and analytical concepts which account for the state of equilibrium which unrecognised entities emerge into. So what kind of equilibrium are we looking at in these cases? For the purposes of this discussion, this author puts forward a notion of ‘speculative equilibrium’ to describe how *de facto* independence can act as a buffer between remaining part of an undesirable pre-conflict status quo and the speculative pursuit of sovereignty and recognition. The conceptual terms traditionally used to convey meaning in the case of unrecognised entities (*de facto* states / quasi-states / unrecognised states) connote a distinction between pre-secessionist reality and *de facto* independence through *a simple dichotomy between once being a component part of a sovereign entity and the post facto ambition to create a new sovereign entity following separation from the parent state.*

The problem with such a dichotomy exists in the grey area which lies between achieving *de facto* independence from the parent state and the fulfilment of the idealistic goal of *de jure* recognition and ascendance to fully sovereign status. The experience of prolonged and continuous *de facto* independence without moving closer to becoming a sovereign state is theoretically ambiguous within literature on unrecognised entities. The crude notion of ‘speculative equilibrium’, as a way of describing the balance of interests which occurs during long-term *de facto* independence, is based on the question of how do these entities produce rational long-term strategies under pressures of illegitimacy, military and economic weakness, and the impropriety of their claims to recognition in international law. The extreme variance between cases indicates that the process of maintaining *de facto* independence is highly speculative given that there is no framework or internationally agreed standard for decision-making in these situations. The result being that unrecognised entities are free to pursue “bespoke” speculative strategies which result in the most stable configuration or outcome achievable – even if this entails the

controversial possibility of reintegration or reabsorption into a sovereign body at the expense of autonomy.

De facto independence as a sovereignty substitute is, therefore, a highly complex relationship involving the unrecognised entity, regional and international actors in a long-term speculative interplay. One of the problems which can be associated with the speculative equilibrium of *de facto* independence is the position of the unrecognised entity in a space outside the nationally bounded state. In cases where a secessionist conflict is reducing the sovereignty of the parent state over some of its territory, new dynamics of negotiation and strategy come to the fore which transcend the truncated definitions governing debates on sovereignty in international relations. In the case of unrecognised entities, secessionist wars which have led to the autonomy of a break-away region require a balance of power analysis with conceptual tools which are usually reserved for examining relations between strong and weak sovereign states. In these cases there often exists a clear subversion of the rubric of sovereignty as the balance of power context remains an intrastate phenomenon given the lack of recognition possessed by the unrecognised entity.

In cases where an unrecognised entity remains a notional component of a sovereign, nationally bounded state, *de facto* independence can be theorised as the transient institutionalisation of autonomy during a period of speculative equilibrium where profound negotiations must take place not only over the future national boundaries of the parent state and its authority, but also over the ability of the unrecognised entity to maintain the case for long term *de facto* independence. In the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, the ongoing period of *de facto* independence has been marked by a continuation of debates and negotiations surrounding the Kurds as stakeholders in Iraqi politics and economics, as well as an increased assertion of their rights as a national minority. These negotiations represent an historic dialogue which began long before the achievement of *de facto* independence, yet the balance of power between the nation state and the national minority has been refigured by political developments in such a way that the interests of the Kurds are embedded within the fundamental sovereign identity of Iraq. Richard Falk argues that [many] “nations” (as self-conscious ethnic units) are “entrapped” within a sovereign space administered by a government that is controlled by a different nation. Such a state may be autonomous vis-à-vis the external world, but its internal legitimacy is

constantly subject to interrogation, if not assault, by assertive national minorities'⁸. Falk's statement can be applied as a superficial representation of historic tensions between the Kurds and the Iraqi state. However, statements such as Falk's are theoretically hampered by the contemporary paradigm of the assertive national minority which has created an unrecognised entity through *de facto* independence. It is, therefore, not merely a question of antagonism between separatists and central governments as this would lead to trivial conclusions concerned merely with form and status at the expense of analysing the intrastate dynamics which exist in cases like Iraq. The case of Iraq urges analysis of how actors can establish *de facto* independence yet remain integrated (or "entrapped") within a national sovereign space.

De facto independence is a problematic substitute for *de jure* recognition as a sovereign space for it does not guarantee any long-term transition from secession to statehood. Whilst it often comes with equilibrium benefits which allow for institutions of governance to take root, autonomous development, and the symbolic politics of nation building, it is always a controversial platform as the sovereign space of the parent (and surrounding) states often remains intact at the formal, cartographic, level regardless of the protections afforded to the unrecognised entity and its government by external actors or agreements. In cases where the *de facto* independence of an unrecognised entity is maintained through the support of an external patron or guarantor there are further complications, such as economic and military dependency, which form an unsound basis for the creation of statehood given that such patronage can further isolate the government of the *de facto* independent territory and prevent it from developing ties with international society and integrating itself into markets and trade outside economic networks most closely associated with support from the external patron. Popescu hints at similar dynamics at work in the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia within Georgia. It is arguable that most unrecognised entities are faced with the dilemma of possessing *de facto* independence but endure a long-term situation of being unable to escape entrapment within the sovereign space of the nationally bounded parent state. This is compounded by external reliance on patrons and guarantors unless the government of the entity in question is both militarily strong and economically capable of bargaining with regional

⁸ Richard Falk, 'Evasions of Sovereignty', in Walker & Mendlovitz (eds.), *Contending Sovereignties: Redefining Political Community* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1990), p. 62.

and international actors from a position of advantage. However, few unrecognised entities possess the latter qualities and even those that do, such as Iraqi Kurdistan and Taiwan, face further constraints and obstacles in the form of an inability to transcend their complex geopolitical positions which preclude ascent to sovereignty and statehood.

3) De Facto Independence as a Paretian System

De facto independence may, in the case of unrecognised entities, represent a political outcome or situation which can be described loosely as *Pareto-Optimal/Pareto-Efficient* or representing a ‘Paretian System’⁹. The term occurs in a number of Economics and Game Theory applications in which Pareto optimality is a measure of efficiency which describes *an outcome which cannot be improved upon without hurting, or damaging the interests, of at least one other player in the game*. A Pareto-optimal outcome in a game between the government of an unrecognised entity seeking independence and the government of the parent state(s) seeking territorial / sovereign integrity, (and neighbouring regional governments seeking influence), would be one in which no government in the game could be made better off without making another worse off. In this game, an outcome in which the *de facto* independence of the unrecognised entity is accommodated without conflict or the loss of sovereign space for the parent state can be described as Pareto-optimal provided such an equilibrium setting is achievable without the consequence of external aggression from an external player such as a proximate regional government. Drawing on the concept of Pareto-optimality in this very basic way focuses our attention on ways in which the possession of *de facto* independence can be maintained over the long-term, and under what conditions.

Charles King was the first analyst to recognise the significance of Paretian Systems to the discussion of disputes surrounding unrecognised entities. In *The Benefits of Ethnic War* (2001) King argues that in many cases involving these entities the ‘disputes have evolved from armed engagements to something close to equilibrium’¹⁰. Here King made a very important observation which, for the first time, hinted at the existence of an underlying equilibrium (in this case the possible existence of a Paretian

⁹ The *Paretian System* refers to the approach to general equilibrium theory initiated largely by Vilfredo Pareto's *Manual of Political Economy* (1906).

¹⁰ Charles King, ‘The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia’s Unrecognised States’, *World Politics*, 53, July 2001, p. 525.

System) which allows the maintenance of *de facto* independence over the long term. King describes the situation in many of these former war zones as: ‘...a dark version of Pareto efficiency: the general welfare cannot be improved – by reaching a genuine peace accord allowing for real reintegration – without at the same time making key interest groups in both camps worse off. Even if a settlement is reached, it is unlikely to do more than recognise this basic logic and its attendant benefits.’¹¹ King says little more regarding Pareto efficiency within his paper (although his writing is clearly influenced by its theoretical implications) but it is possible to build from his analysis an argument that each *de facto* independent unrecognised entity exists in a context specific Paretian System formed out of post-conflict equilibria and negotiations between interest groups.

Examples where an unrecognised entity continues to maintain *de facto* independence in a position of extreme asymmetry or military / economic weakness implies that an equilibrium setting has been achieved between interest groups directly involved or holding a stake in the dispute. Such an outcome indicates that an optimal phase in the development of the dispute has been achieved, and if no one actor is willing to take unilateral steps to facilitate a political gain, due to the disadvantages which would be experienced by other actors (and the consequences thereof), then the maintenance of *de facto* independence by the unrecognised entity is afforded through conditions of Pareto-optimality. The payoff structure in such a situation is a far simplified version of those which occur in economic analyses of Pareto-efficiency and optimality, however, under conditions of ceasefire and negotiation the framework provided allows us to better appreciate the limitations of *de facto* independence as a temporary and often transitory outcome (or phase) in wider, three-way disputes between national minorities seeking political autonomy and sovereign actors with concerns of internal security, regional influence and military balance of power. Maintaining the Pareto-optimality necessary to deliver long-term *de facto* independence is not always the prerogative of the unrecognised entity and it may not be possible for governments of unrecognised regions to bargain from a position of strength due to the lack of checks and balances afforded to them through lacking *de jure* recognition in international law. Full sovereignty, on the one hand, is an extremely rare and unlikely outcome for unrecognised entities as it is not

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 525-526. Emphasis Added.

necessarily an equilibrium setting which can be achieved within the game. *De facto* independence, on the other hand, is an equilibrium outcome of wars of secession and the attainment of autonomy by national minorities, but, as a Pareto-optimal outcome, it is not guaranteed in any *de jure* sense like formal sovereignty. Rather, it represents the optimal outcome of ceasefires and negotiated settlements to ethno-political conflicts which enfranchise the creation of self-administered enclaves and unrecognised entities as long as no party to the arrangement ends up adversely disadvantaged. To proclaim a nascent state, or lay the foundations for full independence in such a situation can destabilise the Pareto-optimality which allowed autonomy and *de facto* independence to be created. This may explain why governments in unrecognised entities behave cautiously when drawn on territorial issues concerning boundaries and cartography in order to avoid disputes which can provoke sovereign states to act in their own interests through use of force. As outcomes, such disputes can be described as *sub-optimal* or ‘pareto inefficient’ in terms of their negative effect on the long-term maintenance of *de facto* independence.

All of this points to a Pareto-optimal path onto which the development of an unrecognised entity can be mapped. As a research tool this could prove useful in comparative analysis of those optimal and sub-optimal outcomes which historically have favoured or inhibited the long-term independence of unrecognised entities throughout history. Volker Rittberger’s analysis of research modelling in the study of international regime formation gives insight into how deductively constructed games and models can enhance empirical comparative research into historical cases. He writes:

Such efforts might not only build upon an already existing base of tested hypotheses but also use a methodology for the comparative analysis of real cases instead of making inferences from deductively constructed games. The methodological step forward consists, in particular, in the modelling of historical conflict situations by ascertaining empirically the preferences of actors (and their ordering) independently of their actual behaviour.¹²

The use of methodologies such as those suggested by Rittberger would enable researchers to identify parameters and dynamics unique to cases represented by unrecognised entities

¹² Volker Rittberger, ‘Research on International Regimes in Germany: The Adaptive Internalization of an American Social Science Concept’, in Volker Rittberger & Peter Mayer, *Regime Theory and International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2002), p.18.

and further differentiate between these cases and other examples where so called “non-state” spaces challenge the concept of the territorially contiguous nation-state.

Thus, there are nations without states, new nations that are invented before our eyes while older ones disintegrate, and older diasporic nations that are being joined by a host of new transnational communities. Nations are now conceived as more fluid, malleable, and unpredictable than ever before... Almost all nations are imagined, or constructed, in connection with a specific area of the globe, a homeland in which that nation is naturally rooted by means of a ‘divine cartography’. In the nationalist imagination, and in the scholarly literature about it, this homeland is seen as uninterrupted, homogeneous, and bounded. Unlike the world map of states – with its clearly demarcated, contiguous, and fairly stable units – the world map of nations is imagined as made up of units that spill over state borders, overlap each other, and are continually pushing for their own exclusive national space... The contiguous uninterrupted homeland is a fiction, as is obvious from the fact that many nations and states have learned to live with discontinuous territories (e.g., the United States with its detached state of Alaska).¹³

This extract by Willem Van Schendel provides a clear illustration of the discourse on “non-state” spaces which has strongly influenced the study of unrecognised entities; in particular, work on *de facto* states between 1998 and 2006. The problem with discursive positions which emphasise the artificiality of the contiguous state and the authenticity of the ‘world map of nations’ is the potential to ignore the considerable leverage state sovereignty exerts in the international system and the particular currency it represents in negotiations with other sovereign actors, particularly on issues of international finance and trade. Van Schendel asserts that the ‘contiguous uninterrupted homeland is a fiction’ yet, in cases where groups have achieved *de facto* independence, contiguous sovereign space is perhaps the greatest obstacle to legitimacy and recognition faced by autonomy movements. States may have learned to live with ‘discontinuous territories’, but the viability of some discontinuous territories is called into question if the compromise is to exist as unrecognised, illegitimate entities which face developmental trajectories of isolation and maldevelopment. This brings us back to the discussion of Pareto-optimality in these situations.

It is very important to acknowledge the unique set of parameters, criteria and variability which exist in each case of *de facto* independence. Each case has a specific

¹³ Willem Van Schendel, ‘Stateless in South Asia: The making of the India-Bangladesh Enclaves’, in Eiki Berg & Henk Van Houtum (eds.), *Routing Borders Between Territories, Discourses and Practices* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 237.

historical, ethno-political, economic, and symbolic variability which determines, to a significant extent, the Pareto-optimality and efficiency of the equilibrium which emerges and allows for conditions of *de facto* independence to take hold. This thesis has presented a wide range of problems associated with the continued use of terms which equate unrecognised entities and *de facto* independence with statehood, when, in fact, the dynamics represented by these cases may not point to the foundation of statehood at all. A way forward lies in the refiguring of political situations involving unrecognised entities in terms of equilibrium outcomes which follow ethno-political conflicts, wars, secession by national minorities, and state break-up. In each historical case where a regional conflict has created conditions favourable to the emergence of an unrecognised entity there are equilibrium settings – levels of Pareto-optimality – which determine the extent to which actors will be able create *de facto* independence. These settings are subject to fluctuation over time and are no means a reliable indicator of the political future of the entity in question. In most cases, sovereign actors (such as the parent state) are able to negotiate from a position of advantage (having recognised rights in international law) and may choose to concede significant powers of self-determination and *de facto* independence to the government of an unrecognised entity as long as the territorial contiguity and cartographic integrity of the nationally bounded state reflects the *status quo ante*. A situation of this sort can again be posited as a theoretical reflection of equilibrium settings with case-specific variability.

In cases where the state actively accommodates the presence of an unrecognised entity, there are a range of sub-optimal outcomes which can result in the breaking of symbolic “covenants” upon which *de facto* independence often relies. The proclamation of an independent state is one such action which could lead to the destruction of equilibrium relations with multiple sovereign actors. Alternatively, becoming a political sphere of influence for sovereign interests outside the national parameters of the parent state can further isolate the unrecognised entity and decrease its level of *de facto* independence over the long-term due to reliance on external protection and patronage. Each of these two conjectures illustrates the often fragile equilibrium relations upon which conditions of *de facto* independence are created. By recognising the fragile equilibrium settings which allow unrecognised entities to emerge, the issue of non-recognition is made clearer. At the formal level, the lack of recognition possessed by

these entities denies them entreated status and the rights and protections of being a recognised international “personality”. Whilst recognition would afford these political communities greater protection in international law, it would be no guarantee of equilibrium relations with surrounding sovereign states. In such a situation, the transition from unrecognised entity to incomplete recognition is the most likely outcome given that it is not incumbent upon all states to give recognition or ratify negotiations which led to such an outcome.

The negotiation of Kosovo’s independence, as a unique case, is highly representative of the contemporary hurdles which stand in the way of transition to statehood. As Marc Weller explains:

Through its unilateral declaration of independence, Kosovo had committed itself to all of the concessions agreed during the Ahtisaari process in the expectation of status. Belgrade could ‘bank’ these concessions relating to its own interests in Kosovo, while still being able to actively oppose Kosovo in its quest for recognition... Belgrade managed to ‘renegotiate’ the Ahtisaari implementation system to some extent from the outside. It managed to retain a role for the UN in Kosovo, and a mechanism through which it could engage with Kosovo in relation to issues of core interest, such as religious heritage. This was placed expressly under the terms of Resolution 1244, confirming the continued applicability of that resolution.¹⁴

However, Weller also explains how the negotiation of Kosovo’s independence subverted many of the institutions of territorial integrity which are enshrined in international law:

On the other hand, while Serbia and Russia were in a position to make independence more difficult for Kosovo, and to ensure that the interests of the Serb community in Kosovo were fully protected, they could not prevent independence. This result goes very much against the grain of the classical international order, which strongly privileges territorial unity over claims to self-determination outside the colonial context. In fact, until Serbia mounted its massive campaign of forced displacement during the 1999 conflict, the organized international community was united in favour of a restoration of autonomy and against the possibility of independence for Kosovo.¹⁵

These extracts from Weller’s analysis highlight the potential variability which exists given that multipartite negotiations often determine the ultimate outcome of a claim to full independence and *de jure* recognition. Whilst unilateral action may be taken under certain circumstances, complex negotiation frameworks governing the recognition of

¹⁴ Marc Weller, ‘Kosovo’s Final Status’, *International Affairs*, 84:6, 2008, p. 1241.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

autonomous entities introduces a new set of equilibrium criteria which must be adapted if we are to assess the Pareto-optimality of a particular outcome. Therefore, the distinction should be made between equilibrium outcomes which represent achieving *de facto* independence and those which represent moves toward full independence as the latter derive many equilibrium criteria from phased multipartite negotiations. By contrast, *de facto* independence may be more representative of bi-lateral, post-conflict stalemate, unstable ceasefire agreements, and strategic speculation on short-term political developments.

Secession has been the subject of wide interdisciplinary study for many decades with most literature focusing in on the dynamics, causes, motives and processes which lead to the fragmentation of host states. Whilst a great amount of literature deals with the dynamics and collective decision making which leads up to the act of secession, far less analysis has been devoted to researching the alternative, *post-facto* outcomes which develop once separation has occurred. At a moment when few, if any, new states are emerging in the international system, the fate of those unrecognised entities which emerged following the secessionist and separatist conflicts of the 1980s and 1990s can tell us a great deal about trend and transformation within the practical utility of secession as a tool for the establishment of new states. By acknowledging the problematic and transitory influence of *de facto* independence as a long-term phase following separation from the host state, this thesis proposes a framework which differentiates between the determinants of secession and the determinants of survival, for a secessionist movement, in the international system thereafter. In 1992 Michael Hechter put forward a fourfold model of secession in which regional group identification, regional collective action, levels of secessionist support, and the response of the host state were posited as key determinants of secessionist dynamics.¹⁶ Hechter's causal analysis of secession provides an extremely comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics behind the emergence of unrecognised entities. However, the real benefit of applying Hechter's models in this discussion is his interlinking of problems which affect secessionist movements throughout their complex transition toward independence.

¹⁶ Michael Hechter, 'The Dynamics of Secession', *Acta Sociologica*, 35, 1992, pp. 267-283

Hechter argues that factors which militate against secession are mostly geopolitical in nature.¹⁷ This is an important consideration as the cases presented by unrecognised entities are subject to geopolitical dynamics which not only militate against secession, but also preclude recognition as a sovereign entity. Hechter also raises the issue that concern regarding secession tends to come in ‘waves’ with what he calls ‘the last great groundswell of secessionist sentiment’ occurring in three periods, namely, following the conclusion of the two world wars, during the mid 1970s, and at the demise of the Cold War¹⁸. The latter period, the demise of the Cold War, is the period which most concerns this discussion due to the geopolitical conditions which led up to, and subsequently determined, the fate of secessionist movements and the unrecognised entities they created. Clearly the unrecognised entities created during this “third wave” of secessionist activity at the end of the Cold War have not fared well in attaining recognition due to shifts in the international political system and geopolitical dynamics which favour the maintenance of sovereign space and securitised national boundaries. On the issue of geopolitical factors Hechter writes:

For the most part, geopolitical factors tend to militate *against* secession. In the first place, as the origins of most current states are multinational, almost all host states themselves face potential secessionist movements. It is not too difficult to conclude that supporting secessionist movements elsewhere might help stir up unpleasant problems at home. This provides the leaders of states with an incentive to collude by universally discouraging secession. In the second place, support for a secessionist movement necessarily comes at the expense of relations with its host state. Given geopolitical realities, the net benefit to be gained by courting secessionists tends to be negative. Sometimes international support helps sustain an otherwise untenable state (as Omrčanin 1976 argues with respect to Tito’s Yugoslavia).¹⁹

Hechter’s account is highly relevant in a contemporary context as secession continues to be universally discouraged. However, the emergence of unrecognised entities at the end of the Cold War and their long-term accommodation within parameters of *de facto* independence, suggests that there are geo-economic and geo-political dynamics which militate against the creation of new states from secession but nonetheless allow for independent enclaves so be sustained given the right conditions. The example of Iraqi

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 278.

¹⁸ Ibid., Notes, p. 280.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 278. Extract contains reference to M. Omrčanin, *Norway, Sweden, Croatia: A Comparative Study of State Secession and Formation* (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Co., 1976).

Kurdistan's highly integrated model of *de facto* independence is partly explained by Hechter's argument that even when faced with mobilised secessionist movements, host states are highly capable of negotiating outcomes which stop short of secession.²⁰ He writes:

They can offer secessionist leaders *incentives* by rewarding them with good jobs contingent on abandoning their support of secession. The regime may also promise, and perhaps even provide, other kinds of resources (such as development projects) to the region so as to persuade rank-and-file members of the secessionist movement that their core interests lie with maintaining a tie to the host state.²¹

Whilst the degree of such incentivised bargaining in Kurdish-Iraqi relations is very much open to debate (as it can be argued that Iraq's Kurds have never pursued a clear secessionist agenda and the incentives given by Baghdad have since 2003 have been lacklustre) the Iraqi example nonetheless represents a costs / benefits negotiation between a sovereign body and a *de facto* independent enclave which is applicable in many cases involving relations between unrecognised entities and the parent states from which they have become *de facto* independent. In the case of Iraqi Kurdistan it appears that the *de facto* independence of those provinces which have been under Kurdish control since 1991 will not be challenged by the metropolitan authorities in Baghdad in return for assurances governing the territorial integrity of the nationally bounded Iraqi state. However, the stability of such agreements should not be over stated as negotiations over boundaries between Iraqi Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq indicate that the region is still a contested space, particularly with regard to the status of population centres such as Kirkuk and areas around Mosul which are claimed by both sides of the dispute. In the examples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia's gravitation toward status as *de facto* Russian regions, we see that irredentist tendencies can also be brought to bear through incentivised bargaining with unrecognised entities over military protection, political affiliation and transition from one sphere of sovereign influence to another. It would, therefore, be counterfactual to assert that negotiations and equilibrium outcomes in these complex situations represent 'stability' or 'agreement' as clearly the geopolitics of secession and *de facto*

²⁰ Ibid., p. 277.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 277-8

independence are not conducive to such generalised descriptions given the pervasive variability which can inhibit and destabilise cooperation.

Spatial Implications of De Facto Independence: Theoretical Issues

The crux of the argument presented here is the proposal that following secession, or the achievement of *de facto* independence, unrecognised entities endure conditions of long-term ambiguity in which the maintenance of independence and autonomy often becomes a far greater priority than lobbying for formal recognition. Geopolitical conditions unique to each case always determine the fate of these entities and whether or not an equilibrium outcome is achieved with surrounding states which favours the long-term presence of an autonomous enclave. Theorising unrecognised entities is no easy task due to the peculiarities of each case and the often multi-tiered levels of analysis required to form a basic understanding of the causal dynamics behind each political scenario. Throughout this thesis it has been argued that one of the core problems associated with area studies, security studies, international relations, political science, social science and international politics approaches, has been a tendency to theorise these entities as nascent states rather than acknowledging the long-term ambiguities within *de facto* independence which preclude statehood.

Critical discourse on the subject of territoriality and state space has provided a timely and entirely justifiable deconstruction of state-centric methodologies and theoretical positions which have tended to ‘contain’ nations, populations, cultures and ethnicities within the cartographic and geographical boundaries of states. One of the most insightful analytical works on the subject is Neil Brenner’s *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (2004). Brenner’s analysis of the *epistemologies of state-centrism*²² assists us in understanding the dichotomy which exists between theory and reality in the case of unrecognised entities. Brenner identifies three epistemological assumptions which have clearly exerted an influence in literature on unrecognised entities. They are *spatial fetishism*, *methodological territorialism*, and *methodological nationalism*.²³ The three assumptions are defined by Brenner:

²² Neil Brenner, *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 37.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[...] state-centrism can be defined most precisely in terms of its three most essential, if usually implicit, geographical assumptions: (a) the conception of space as a static platform of social action that is not itself constituted or modified socially; (b) the assumption that all social relations are organized within territorially self-enclosed spatial containers; and (c) the assumption that all social relations are organized at a national scale or are undergoing a process of nationalization. The first assumption results in a *spatial fetishism* in which space is seen as being timeless, and therefore immune to historical change. The second assumption results in *methodological territorialism* in which territoriality – the principle of spatial enclosure – is treated as the necessary spatial form for social relations. The third assumption generates a *methodological nationalism* in which the national scale is treated as the ontologically primary locus of social relations.²⁴

He goes on to add:

Taken together, these assumptions generate an internalist model of societal development in which national territoriality is presumed to act as a static, fixed, and timeless container of historicity... While all three of these assumptions have pervaded mainstream social science, any given mode of analysis may be said to be state-centric, in the terms proposed here, when the assumption of spatial fetishism is linked either to methodological territorialism or methodological nationalism... Defined in this manner, a state-centric epistemology has pervaded the modern social sciences since their inception during the late nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, political science has been the most explicitly state-centric among the social sciences. States have been viewed as politically sovereign and economically self-propelled entities, with national state territoriality understood as the basic reference point in terms of which all subnational and supranational political-economic processes are to be classified.²⁵

The three *assumptions* defined by Brenner are of great importance to future research on unrecognised entities. Firstly, Brenner's observations highlight the distinct presence of discursive and methodological narratives which determined how autonomous, *de facto* independent, enclaves came to be rationalised in state-centric terms which emphasised stateness over many other transitional dynamics. In most cases the conflicts and disputes from which these entities emerged were far from frozen and regional tensions continued to determine their future. It was not acknowledged that statehood and sovereignty – in all their forms – had less applicability to evolving realities in these disputes than immediate concerns of security, conflict resolution, negotiation and day-to-day economic survival.

Brenner's framework also sheds light on many of the terminological problems which affected the field of research into unrecognised entities. The definitions which emphasised these entities as “-states” constructed them as contained political spheres and

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 38-39

‘static platforms’, ‘self-enclosed spatial containers’²⁶ and nationally bounded spaces regardless of the fact that the ethnic and communal contexts from which the secessionist movements evolved often displayed wider trans-national and trans-regional dynamics. These dynamics exert a forceful influence in the Eurasian and Caucasian unrecognised entities where ethnic ties to patron states have, in the notable cases of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno Karabakh, determined the future status of these enclaves and their relations with parent entities, neighbouring states and international actors. The reality of such ties militates against static, sovereign self-containment given the wider ethno-political networks which exist in these regional examples. Even in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, the presence of sizeable Kurdish populations in the neighbouring states of Turkey, Syria and Iran makes the autonomy of this enclave unrepresentative of any ethnic Kurdish homeland which can be nationally static or self-contained given the fault lines of sovereign space which partition a *greater* Kurdistan. The fluidity of ethnicity across borders, regions and international space works against the argument that ethnic homogeneity is a benchmark for statehood as most states are multinational, multiethnic composites as opposed to detached political enclaves. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of state-centrism adopted by post-Cold War separatists, and the *methodological nationalism* contained in analyses of these conflicts and unrecognised entities in academic disciplines, created an illusory picture of break-away ethnic enclaves as nascent states. In truth, there was nothing *de facto* about the status of these so called states, or their ability to function as states, rather, it was the level of independence they could maintain under conditions of illegitimacy, criminalisation, and isolation which defined them as unique.

State-centric narratives contained within literature on unrecognised entities almost always exhibit a tendency toward the geographical and spatio-territorial assumptions defined by Brenner, regardless of the empirical setting. In 2001, Charles King began his article *The Benefits of Ethnic War* by proclaiming ‘War is the engine of state building...’²⁷ and asking ‘...how precisely does the chaos of war become transformed into networks of profit, and how in turn can these informal networks harden into

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Charles King, ‘The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia’s Unrecognized States,’ *World Politics*, 53, July 2001, p. 524.

institutions of states?’²⁸ The problem with the epistemological obsession with states, state building, and statecraft within literature on unrecognised entities is the presupposed role of spatial enclosure and *de facto* independence as the primary locus not just for the creation of states, but also the development of analytical concepts, models, frameworks and approaches within the literature. These epistemological tendencies have arguably been stronger in analysis of unrecognised entities in post-Soviet space with state-centric emphasis being the hallmark of analysis across the literature. Unrecognised entities in the post-Soviet spaces of Eurasia and the Caucasus appeared to have the necessary levels of stability, ethnic homogeneity, military capability, and institutional formation to command definition as states ‘in all but name’, but, in doing so, a great analytical gamble was taken.

The state-centric epistemology on unrecognised entities developed out of scattered academic contributions and an interdisciplinary environment where analysts routinely built upon earlier frameworks and models without subjecting them to critical analysis. The low level of literature and research output in this field of study engendered a situation whereby state-centric assumptions and definitions based on status, spatial enclosure, comparative institutional development, and international law became quickly entrenched and part of an ongoing dialogue between academic discourse and the object of study. Whilst issues of spatial form, status, and position in international society are incredibly important factors in any discussion of unrecognised entities, they are not a given in complex ethno-political situations of this type. The wars, conflicts and disputes from which most unrecognised entities emerge are often far from settled and under conditions of *de facto* independence for the unrecognised entity there is no guarantee of recognition or ascent to statehood. It would seem that the epistemological discourses on unrecognised entities remain detached from the fact that these enclaves, entities and spaces are contested at a very basic level regardless of the apparent unitary modalities exhibited in many cases. This dynamic of contestation is acknowledged by the very fact that few, if any, unrecognised entities achieve statehood after secession or separation. It also accounts for the attitude of international society toward secessionist and separatist

²⁸ Ibid.

entities, an attitude which is cautious and shows little appetite for the deconstruction of sovereign space.

We arrive at two fundamental theoretical conflicts. Firstly, the argument presented in this chapter has highlighted a theoretical dichotomy between the limited and problematic nature of the equilibrium represented by *de facto* independence, and state-centric epistemological traditions which have not recognised the long term and pseudo-transitional predicaments which befall unrecognised entities under such conditions. It is argued that this state-centric epistemology has created a nationalised, territorialist model for unrecognised entities which is not only premature in many of its assumptions, but also ill-fitting given the absence of the necessary territory-sovereignty nexus²⁹ of recognised statehood in these cases. Secondly, this chapter highlights the conflict which exists between *de facto* independent unrecognised entities, on the one hand, and sovereign spaces, on the other, that have recourse to the rights and privileges contained in having their territory-sovereignty interests protected in international law. This second theoretical dichotomy concerns the problem of unrecognised entities possessing *de facto* independence from sovereign space(s), and that level of independence being accommodated within the modern interstate system, but ultimately such independence represents no qualification for *de jure* recognition given that such a transition would infringe the territory-sovereignty nexus in which the unrecognised entity is situated and potentially reignite a dispute, or create new ones, which lead to further regional conflict and instability. When combined, these two highlighted dichotomies account for many of the theoretical tensions which confront the epistemological development of research into unrecognised entities - tensions which remain unaccounted for in theoretical discourses on the subject as they simply have not been tackled in any critical sense.

The relevance of all this for the study of unrecognised entities will be evident. By contrasting the latent imagery and myths in academic discourse concerning stateness with the limiting and pseudo-transitional predicaments associated with *de facto* independence under conditions of illegitimacy, we are able to escape the counter factuality which this thesis associates with state-centric approaches which do not account for evolving realities on the ground. By acknowledging the theoretical and practical asymmetry which

²⁹ Brenner, Op. Cit., p. 40.

characterises the relationship between *de facto* independent entities and the sovereign spaces which surround them, the need to contextualise unrecognised entities as states is lessened and a fuller understanding of the dynamics in these cases is enabled. This thesis argues, therefore, that while unrecognised entities may appear to conform to the rubric of statecraft in certain respects, this is nonetheless a subversion, in both theory and practice, given that they endure long-term *de facto* independence under conditions of illegitimacy and they do not occupy the same territory-sovereignty nexus as *de jure* sovereign entities. The crux of this position is that unrecognised entities do not have the same rights and protections as those afforded to sovereign states; they are not formally recognised as states; and they are essentially contested spaces and a site of ongoing dispute with nationally bounded sovereign states. This argument is based on the reality that sovereignty has considerable leverage in territorial disputes involving ethno-nationalist movements and the states from which they seek separation and autonomy. In many respects it is a reflection of *state-centric* truisms and is an argument which subtly recalibrates the way in which we have approached and viewed the unrecognised entity so far by acknowledging the leverage of sovereignty in these disputes.

The *de facto* independent enclaves which this thesis defines as unrecognised entities do not represent states in any sense which is widely generalisable across all cases. To varying degrees these entities do represent *simulacra* of states and a conscious mimesis by ethno-nationalist movements to establish autonomous spheres of influence and homelands outside the administrative control of sovereign states. The problem for these movements is that no matter how effective or standards oriented the enclave they control, territorial-sovereign rights remain highly commodified in these situations and it is very difficult, if not impossible, for actors representing unrecognised entities to bargain from a position of strength without strong third-party or multipartite advocacy from other sovereign actors. Even if the *de facto* independent entity has a comparative advantage in military capability or economic resources to the sovereign actors with whom negotiations must be sought, it is highly unlikely that the unrecognised entity will achieve more than *de facto* independence if the alternative is regional conflict for which there may be no appetite.

Therefore, contrary to the assertions made by King in 2001, it appears that ethnic or secessionist war is a good maker of *de facto* independent enclaves and a poor maker of

states in the long-term. While it may be said that critical studies on sovereignty, state territoriality, self-determination, and the influence of globalisation and trans-national networks have contributed significantly to the deconstruction of traditional approaches to international politics, there remains the fact that state creation cannot be *self-certificated* by national minorities and ethno-nationalist movements as invariably such challenges strengthen the position of sovereign actors by placing them under threat in an adversarial regional setting. This then gives sovereign actors a wide range of options to protect their own interests depending on which side of the dispute they are on, whether or not they support the break-away enclave through economic, military, or ethno-political affiliations, or whether the unrecognised entity can be exploited as leverage in a wider geopolitical contest between sovereign states. These are just theoretical illustrations of the variability which militates against statehood in these cases. In the opinion of this author there is very little evidence of the prerogative of statehood resting in the hands of the secessionist movement even if a favourable (Pareto optimal) equilibrium enables the maintenance of *de facto* independence over the long term. Accordingly, as Brenner elaborates:

[The] bundling of territoriality to state sovereignty is arguably the essential characteristic of the modern interstate system. In this system, political authority is grounded upon: (a) the *territorialisation* of state power, in which each state attempts to exercise exclusive sovereignty over a delineated, self-enclosed national space; and (b) the globalization of the territorial state form, in which the entire globe is progressively subdivided among contiguous, nonoverlapping national state territories.³⁰

In this sense the unrecognised entity violates both the *territorialisation* of state power highlighted by Brenner, and the contiguity of territorial state form as a globalised methodology of national subdivision. Opposition from international sovereign actors to the self-certification of statehood through secession is a reflection of the reification of state territory and the enduring drive to prevent fragmentation of these nationally bounded enclosures. Brenner makes the crucial point that ‘territorialization, on any spatial scale, must be viewed as a historically specific, incomplete, and conflictual *process* rather than as a pre-given, natural, or permanent condition.’³¹ This point

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. 43.

encapsulates an underlying dynamic which influences the three-way relationship between international society, sovereign states, and unrecognised entities. It can be argued that unrecognised entities emerge out of conflicts and disputes where the territorialisation of national space is, or has been, the subject of incomplete and conflictual processes as stated by Brenner. However, this reality of instability and tension in the intrastate system is then subject to the ideological influences of state-centric and ethno-nationalist claims – claims fielded from both sides – which employ the language of pre-given, natural, and permanent conditionality which can be associated with nationalist ideology and rhetoric.

Whereas Brenner urges us to distinguish between these layers of discourse on territorialisation, unrecognised entities are a prime situational example of how the two are conflated in a synthetic relationship and how this dynamic becomes operationalised during disputes between sovereign states and unrecognised entities. At its most basic level, these disputes involve the *de facto* independent entity contesting the status quo whilst sovereign actors do their utmost to either maintain it or create a favourable outcome if secession is inevitable. The actions of governments within unrecognised entities are not displays of anachronistic cultural militancy, and their claims to self-determination, autonomy and national destiny are no enchanted crusade for romantic ethnic utopias. The savage wars and ethnic enmities from which many of these ethno-political movements emerged are a strong indicator of inherent artificiality within systems and methodologies of territorial sovereignty. However, outside of realms of epistemologies which acknowledge the fault lines which run through the interstate system, there is a strong tradition of treating territorial sovereignty as an aesthetic object, or commodity, which can be traded between sovereign states but cannot be established from the bottom-up through ethno-political entrepreneurship. This commodification masks the reality of the state as an assemblage of heterogeneous elements³². As Ulrich Best comments, ‘Even if narrowly applied to the state, the concept of the state as an assemblage conveys the image of a multiplicity, with numerous territorializations and

³² See Ulrich Best, ‘Gnawing at the Edges of the State: Deleuze and Guattari and Border Studies’, in Eiki Berg & Henk Van Houtum (eds.), *Routing Borders Between Territories, Discourses and Practices* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 182-184.

detritorializations taking place. There is no need to keep the gaze fixed on the map, only one element of the assemblage.’³³

Is There a New Theoretical Approach?

The emergence of unrecognised entities, wherever they occur, represents a de-territorialisation (or a departure from models of state contiguity), and a move toward territorial and political revision. To move toward a new theoretical and conceptual synthesis which utilises fresh interdisciplinary approaches it is necessary to break with the idea that these entities are contiguous pre-sovereign states. Such a break requires an understanding of how these entities have been rationalised historically and how the assumptions and generalisations which shaped academic discourse were also a reflection of scholars responding to political developments in the post-Cold War period and throughout the early twenty-first century. By using discourse analysis and conducting a comparative theoretical assessment of the analytical concepts central to the study of unrecognised entities with the conceptualisations found in other theoretical literatures, this study has identified problems of anachronism within the field. The seat of this anachronism is the inverted form of state-centrism which has been discussed at length throughout the preceding chapters and sections. The production of meaning on unrecognised entities through language and definitions more suitably used in discussions surrounding *de jure* sovereignties, definitions such as ‘*de facto* states’ and all other terminologies using ‘state’ as a point of departure, have created a twofold problem of confusion and inertia which cast a shadow over both empirical and theoretical research output in the field.

Whether or not these entities are in fact fully functioning states is a moot point and one which deserves a cautious response. At the theoretical level it is very important to recognise that the unrecognised entity remains illegitimate yet *de facto* independent, rendering it an effective simulacrum of a legitimate, territorially sovereign state. By constructing these entities as states ‘in all but name’ or simply states which function just as effectively, if not more so, than comparable sovereign states, we are effectively speculating that unrecognised entities not only possess the qualifying attributes of statecraft, but are also capable of projecting themselves as such in the international

³³ Ibid., p. 188.

system. In addition, this inversion of state-centrism to favour the unrecognised entity as a political unit in the interstate system presupposes a destiny of recognition and transition to full independence which, in nearly all cases, appears counterfactual given evolving realities. This chapter has urged a reappraisal of *de facto* independence due to its significance as a common dynamic which is identifiable across nearly all cases. In fact it is one of the very few attributes which, it can be argued, all unrecognised entities have experienced at one time or another for varying durations. Whilst literature on unrecognised entities has recognised the importance of *de facto* independence as a defining attribute of the phenomenon, it has not been subjected to adequate theoretical analysis. The development of new theoretical approaches toward unrecognised entities will require a re-evaluation of the role of *de facto* independence as an equilibrium outcome that allows them to remain in the interstate system. It is important that *de facto* independence is not misrepresented as a transitional substitute for full sovereignty, or statehood ‘in all but name’ as inevitably this will lead to equivalences with statehood which is a hallmark of earlier scholarship on the subject. Avoiding equivalence with statehood is an important task for future scholarship as there are clear theoretical and practical differences between being ‘state-like’ and being fully sovereign.

Unrecognised entities are subject to a plethora of dynamics which enable them to be differentiated from sovereign entities. The important questions are not whether or not these illegitimate entities are unnecessarily excluded from international society, or whether they are such effective simulacra of sovereign states that they *should* be states, rather, our attention should focus closely on how *de facto* independence emerges as a long-term outcome from disputes and conflicts, how it does not necessitate a transition to full statehood in the majority of cases, and how enclaves can be sustained in this manner under quite adverse geopolitical conditions over different periods of time. The crux of this argument centres on the observation that rather than witnessing an evolution from unrecognised entity to sovereign state, we are seeing a wide range of counterintuitive dynamics and factors at play which appear to facilitate the containment of these entities in the interstate system through long-term *de facto* independence. Although there may be some hints in the literature that such a dynamic may surround *de facto* independence, there has been no significant study of unrecognised entities which expands the analysis in this direction. For example, in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan the enclave experiences a high

degree of *de facto* independence from the Iraqi state yet is sufficiently contained within, and integrated into, the territorial-sovereign nexus of Iraq. This enables a range of bargaining strategies to be pursued by Kurdish actors in political negotiations with internal, metropolitan and external actors. Statehood may have prestige benefits, but for actors within unrecognised entities there are possible advantages to maintaining *de facto* independence which militate against the continued pursuit of full sovereignty. A comparative empirical analysis of the strategies used by governments and actors in unrecognised entities may shed light on those incentives which make the pursuit of statehood less of a priority.

All of this raises questions pertinent to the discussion of motives behind secession. Whilst generalisation should be avoided in favour of examining the nuanced political scenarios in each case, the examples of seceded and *de facto* independent territories examined in this thesis (with the exception of Kosovo) display a tendency toward outcomes short of full independence. It is, therefore, quite possible that full secession is not necessarily the explicit agenda of all movements involved in the creation of *de facto* independent enclaves, and that dynamics of fragmentation rather than secession engendered the creation of these entities. Returning to earlier state-centric conceptualisations, the *de facto* state was always rationalised as a ‘secessionist’ entity. This is now a problematic departure for future research as not only is it arguable that some unrecognised entities are not pursuing secession, but secession itself may be an outcome which examples like Iraqi Kurdistan show is undesired by ethno-nationalist movements. This problem was tackled by Hechter in the early 1990s. Building on earlier works which dealt with secession and ethno-political mobilisation, Hechter identified the possibility that secession was a less feasible and attractive strategy than it is often assumed to be:

It has long been appreciated that secession is a highly improbable outcome... few regions have the structural requirements for the development of a secessionist movement. Those few that do must be capable of developing political organizations capable of overcoming the free-rider problem – a problem that is far more severe in the case of secession than many other political agendas. Even when solutions to the free-rider problem are at hand, it is not even clear that secession is an outcome that most self-identified secessionists themselves sincerely desire. The final reason for the improbability of secession is that the host state is far from powerless to protect its territorial integrity. If the secessionist territory is large and/or mountainous, if the

regime has too few discretionary resources to provide the necessary incentives, and if constitutional reforms are either difficult to enact or regarded as insufficient by the territorial population, then and only then is the host state forced to contemplate acceding to secessionist demands.³⁴

The mixed fortunes of unrecognised entities in the intrastate system are testimony to the problematic nature of secession, as outlined in the extract above. In most post-Cold War cases the drive to secede has not led to statehood, and movements which embarked on the road to national self-determination and *de jure* recognition have found themselves contained by dynamics of long-term *de facto* independence as a product of fragmentation. This level of independence, as has been argued throughout this chapter, is a poor substitute for sovereignty which can keep accession to the club of sovereign states in abeyance. However the achievement of *de facto* independence need not signify a perfunctory and isolated existence in the international system. Given that many unrecognised entities are located in highly important geopolitical regions containing sought-after natural resources, their presence in the interstate system makes them an important feature of the political landscape wherever they are encountered. As such, unrecognised entities are highly capable of influencing international relations even though they do not operate with the same leverage as sovereign states. Put simply, they present a new geoeconomic and geopolitical dynamic within the international system which is only beginning to be theorised.

Conclusion

In line with the main argument of this chapter, the concept of *de facto* independence constitutes the central inter-contextual dynamic which defines unrecognised entities – not secession and secessionist intent. The presupposed dynamics of secession, or secessionist agendas, which formerly defined objects such as the *de facto* state, are increasingly less applicable and less general given the wide variability which exists across cases. This argument is formed against the backdrop of recent area studies analysis of post-Soviet space in the Caucasus, and how a number of what were once uniformly defined as *de facto* states are exhibiting trends which arguably amount to absorption and ‘*de facto* regionalisation’ under the aegis of sovereign patron (or

³⁴ Hechter, *Op. Cit.*, p. 280.

protector) states. The case of Iraqi Kurdistan, as an unrecognised entity in the Middle East, is also perceived as a challenge to earlier conceptualisations of the *de facto* state, as trend and transformation within this *de facto* independent enclave not only indicates a move away from political strategies which can be interpreted as overtly secessionist, but it is arguable that the question of secession does not define political relations between the Kurds and the Iraqi state.

When packaged under the title '*de facto* state', significant dynamics are hidden from view and a now outmoded conceptual framework is superimposed over political situations which deserve a far greater appreciation of case variability. This chapter focused in detail on dynamics related to *de facto* independence which destabilise the view of unrecognised entities as a purely secessionist phenomenon. It is very easy when dealing with concepts closely related to self-determination and ethno-nationalist ideology to assume a linear, deterministic position in relation to intrastate conflict and the de-territorialisation of sovereign space. One of the core arguments underpinning this chapter is that such linearity has proven itself to be too limiting in the presence of evolving realities in parts of the world where state fragmentation has led to the emergence of unrecognised entities. These entities have experienced *de facto* independence for many years yet have made very little headway in convincing international society of their right to *de jure* statehood. The question is what other dynamics are at play in these situations given that some long-term independent entities are now coming under the increasing influence of the state once more. This study proposes closer scrutiny of dynamics of *de facto* independence as a threefold outcome of state fragmentation rather than pure secession. Under these outcomes the limitations and parameters of this unique form of independence are defined as equilibrium conditions under which a wide range of possible political negotiations can take place concerning the interests of internal and external actors involved in these political situations.

The long-term status of unrecognised entities, it is argued, is influenced if not determined by factors which impact on their ability to maintain *de facto* independence. As has already been stated, the improbability of accession to statehood implies that, in the majority of cases, remaining autonomous and administratively independent is often the optimum outcome which can be gained. This raises the question of whether these entities are in fact (a) purely operating in a secessionist context after a secessionist conflict, or (b)

whether they are a product of other dynamics of state fragmentation which have given ethno-nationalist movements the opportunity to consolidate *de facto* independent enclaves which operate outside the sovereign authority of the state but remain embedded within the context of the interstate system. This thesis argues that the latter position is a more plausible representation of the dynamics which shape unrecognised entities. This chapter builds upon a more nuanced conceptual appreciation of *de facto* independence in a way which avoids any overt or explicit equivalence with statehood. By doing so it builds directly on arguments formed earlier in the thesis which questioned the appropriateness of depicting these entities as states ‘in all but name’. The background to this argument is the recognition of political discourse within such definitions. This political discourse is identified as a state-centric trope which is highly problematic from a theoretical standpoint.

To recognise that these entities are *not* states is to make an important conceptual distinction which is not found in literature on the problem. Firstly, unrecognised entities do not have the same traction or leverage as nationally bounded sovereign states either in international law or when it comes to protecting their territorial integrity. There may be cases where an unrecognised entity is militarily strong or is protected by the support of a patron state, but this is no guarantee of survival. The key to understanding how unrecognised entities survive under such asymmetric conditions lies in the very fact that they are *not* states and are able to exploit state fragmentation, border conflicts, and overlapping spheres of geopolitical influence in such a way that ethno-nationalist movements and gains can emerge as *de facto* independent simulacrum of territorial sovereignty. They may be a likeness of states but the methodologies pursued by actors within these autonomous enclaves suggest that statehood would only isolate them in what are often tense and complex economic and political games involving multipartite interests.

De facto independence gives a wide range of options to actors within unrecognised entities which allow them to bargain from unorthodox positions in negotiations with state governments. Many of these options, such as absorption into the patron state, are not available to other sovereign actors. Their position along long-standing political fault lines, their proximity to territories of resource importance and their geographic locations often mean that regional and international actors *have to*, or

want to deal with them. Far from being of peripheral political economic and geoeconomic significance, these entities represent a new paradigm in international relations given that secession is no longer a prerequisite for the attainment and maintenance of *de facto* independence over the long-term. Equally, the quest for statehood can be abandoned at any point. It is not incumbent upon the ruling authorities in unrecognised entities to implement the rubric of statecraft or conform to international standards. Thus, it is argued, a preoccupation with spatial form and status has led analysts down a state-centric blind alley. This does not suggest a need to abandon of the state as an analytical concept, or negate the powerful role of sovereignty and *de jure* political authority in the interstate system. Instead, one of the key challenges for future research in this area is a departure from earlier notions which demanded equivalence with states and a move toward understanding the highly elastic political methodologies, strategies and tactics used by actors within unrecognised entities to maintain their presence and influence in the interstate and international systems.

8. Conclusions

This aim of this thesis has been to discuss theoretical and conceptual problems encountered in the study of unrecognised 'state-like' entities in the interstate system. It represents the first book-length assessment of theoretical and conceptual trends within literature on the subject of unrecognised entities in general and, in so doing, achieves a depth of analysis which has not previously been available. It is the first study to situate and acknowledge the example of Iraqi Kurdistan as a deviating case which challenges many of the basic assumptions and generalisations characteristic of analysis in this field of inquiry. It is also the first study to consider the historical construction of academic discourses on the subject by assessing the theoretical assumptions which emerged out of previous multidisciplinary authorship. As such, it represents the only *corpus* study of its kind to have been undertaken on the subject. The thesis further contributes to knowledge by shedding new light on the nature of unrecognised entities in the global interstate system. Through its analysis of the complex relationships which exist between sovereign states and these *de facto* independent enclaves, it expands on earlier theoretical and conceptual excursus to tackle evolving trends and transformations, in regions such as Iraqi Kurdistan which are not accommodated by the narrow theoretical and contextual parameters of earlier works.

From the outset this thesis places considerable emphasis on the fact that dedicated literature on the subject of unrecognised entities is relatively scarce and very little academic output on the subject has been forthcoming in recent years. The analysis contained within this thesis identifies the core works which form the corpus of literature on unrecognised entities and traces the development of analytical concepts, such as Scott Pegg's '*de facto* state', from their inception to their modification in subsequent literature. Central to fulfilling the need for a new theoretical discussion of unrecognised entities was the task of examining earlier definitions in critical detail. A key argument developed through the course of this study is that there is a pressing need to develop a new theoretical engagement with the phenomena of unrecognised entities which is not constrained by definitions which emphasise secessionism or superficial likenesses to sovereign states. It is argued that definitions which are grounded in notions of status in

international law and levels of similarity to states limit our understanding of case specific variability and are no longer appropriate lenses through which to analyse these political scenarios.

To facilitate the development of this argument, this thesis intentionally depoliticised the object of study and broke with earlier discursive positions through the use of the term *unrecognised entity* throughout. This was an integral component of the analytical methodology developed for this study as it enabled research to be conducted from a position of conceptual neutrality. The aim of this depoliticisation was to create a split with earlier theoretical positions which defined these units of political mobilisation as states. This thesis argues that these entities are not states due to factors such as the nature of their illegitimacy in international law, their locations within pre-existing sovereign space, their disputed territorial and cartographic boundaries, lack of rights to prevent external interference in their domestic affairs, and the limitations which often accompany *de facto* independence. The study, therefore, makes a clear theoretical break with works which define these entities as *de facto*-, quasi-, pseudo-, semi-, and unrecognised *states*. It should, therefore, be no matter for surprise, still less for disappointment, if this study fails to attain the disciplinary completeness and simplicity which are found in established works of reference.

It is argued that situations of this type, with so much variability between cases, are far more ambiguous than has so far been conceded in existing empirical and theoretical analysis of the problem. It is argued that to define these phenomena as states presupposes the outcome of state fragmentation in a highly premature manner and one which risks unintentional bias and the advocacy of unrealistic outcomes to ethno-political conflicts. It is also far too generic to assume that all unrecognised entities are but one step away from full sovereignty, or are using *de facto* independence as a platform to conform to international standards which will lead to accession to the international 'club' of states. This study takes the view that state-centric discourses such as these have created many clichés with which unrecognised entities have become associated. It is argued that these clichés and generalisations have been repeatedly integrated into analytical frameworks since the 1990s at the expense of a more nuanced theoretical understanding of the problem.

Unrecognised entities present significant analytical challenges to any study which seeks to situate them within the praxis of international statecraft. Part of the problem is the fact that these entities exhibit many of the features associated with sovereign states and any attempt to construct a different picture, within such an exclusive field of research, appears counterintuitive and potentially controversial. As one of its key findings this study identifies the presence of ongoing terminological disagreement between analysts and scholars as an indicator of, on the one hand, a balkanised field of study and, on the other hand, an enduringly controversial object of study which divides scholarly opinion. It is argued that the definitions, designations and discursive positions adopted in relevant examples of academic analysis greatly depend on the research background and interpretative traditions each author brings to their research. By tracing the development of definitions used to describe these phenomena, this thesis sheds light on the interpretative fragmentation which is symbolic of the field of study. The study has found that the basic assumptions and generalisations laid down in the mid to late 1990s when security studies, area studies, and international politics disciplines began to examine the *de facto* state, have endured in spite of the apparent adjustment and modification of concepts and modalities contributed by later authors. It is argued that no significant shift in our understanding has occurred in international relations and international political thought on the subject of unrecognised entities since the works of Pegg, King, Lynch and Kolstø. Whilst it is appreciated that the works which form the literary backbone of this study are few and are drawn from a range of disciplines, this thesis contends that an unsatisfactory theoretical consensus exists which views unrecognised entities as states ‘in all but name’ or states ‘in waiting’.

Many of the arguments presented in this study are concerned with questions surrounding whether or not these entities should still be regarded as states. From the outset this thesis presents the term ‘*de facto* state’, and other terms which emphasise inherent stateness, as problematic constructs. It is argued that the presence of overwhelming variability among cases renders such generalised definitions obsolete. By examining the case of Iraqi Kurdistan in critical comparative perspective as an unrecognised entity within a global nexus of comparable political scenarios, this thesis highlights the theoretical inertia present in contemporary analysis of unrecognised entities which continues to depict and designate these phenomena as states. This inertia is

identified through examining how concepts of secession, representative government, state-centrism, ideology, *de facto* independence, autonomy, and state fragmentation can flux and bend according to each case. Whilst a comparative empirical analysis of unrecognised entities is not presented within this study due to the different research requirements and constraints of time placed upon this study, this thesis nonetheless takes the discussion of unrecognised entities into new theoretical ground.

The study has found that definitions which portray unrecognised entities as 'secessionist' create significant theoretical problems for researchers. To assume secessionist intent across all cases, it is argued, represents one of the enduring fallacies within analysis on the subject. Not all unrecognised entities are the product of secessionist conflicts between an ethno-nationalist movement and the metropolitan apparatus of the sovereign space from which independence is sought. When analysed discursively, this representation of secession dominates literature on the subject and is the primary motif through which unrecognised entities have been regarded and imagined within the literature. Among its findings, this thesis presents a range of conceptual and theoretical approaches which falsify many of the core assumptions on secession found in works on the subject. Secession, it is argued, has been misrepresented as the dominant force behind the emergence of unrecognised states. The case of Iraqi Kurdistan demonstrates other variables in which the partitioning of space and the potential for the central authorities to withdraw (or secede) from part of its own sovereign space, thus enfranchising ethno-nationalist autonomy movements, play a significant role as dynamics. State fragmentation and the weakness of central authorities are posited as dynamics other than secession which enable autonomous enclaves to emerge. The view of ethno-nationalist movements seceding, creating states, then waiting for international recognition is too problematic and does not contain the theoretical flexibility to account for contradictory outcomes. Secession, it is argued, represents an *ideal type* which is rarely achieved in practice.

This study recognises that there are inherent similarities between unrecognised entities and sovereign states. It does not seek to deny the accomplishments of autonomy movements in this regard. Rather, it is intended to introduce a discussion of variability which has so far been flattened or absent from academic analysis. It acknowledges the capability of governments within unrecognised entities to create effective institutional

apparatus and coherent political narratives concerning their right to self-determination and, ultimately, sovereignty. This thesis in no way seeks to depoliticise the ethno-political conflicts which are largely responsible for the creation of these entities. The analysis presented by this study is a theoretical response aimed at shedding light on how unrecognised entities maintain themselves in the interstate system. *De facto* independence emerges as a significant focus for later analysis and this thesis argues that instead of dynamics of secession representing the *modus operandi* of unrecognised entities; it is the commonality of *de facto* independence which serves as a more useful concept for theoretical generalisation. It is argued that *de facto* independence is the only quality which can be generalised in these cases. The political situations which lead to the creation of unrecognised entities are, it is argued, too diverse to be constrained by highly nuanced and theoretically specific concepts such as secession, levels of representative government, or, indeed, institutional efficiency when compared with sovereign states. Case-specific variability inhibits sweeping definition or representation, however, it can be argued that *de facto* independence from a sovereign body is a factor which provides commonality between cases which is otherwise lost when other dynamics are given theoretical priority. Whilst *de facto* independence is acknowledged as a quality possessed by these entities, it is not acknowledged as the dominant point of theoretical commonality between these cases. This thesis, therefore, presents a significant contribution to knowledge through its detailed examination of *de facto* independence and its presentation of a theoretical approach toward this dynamic which accommodates case specificity and enables contemporary dynamics and evolving realities to be theorised more inclusively.

However, an investigation of this sort is not without its pitfalls and limitations. Being a *corpus* study utilising critical theoretical techniques in a multidisciplinary context, this study was always hard to situate within a specific disciplinary tradition. Due to its analysis of theoretical problems in a wide range of disciplines it does not emerge from a sole theoretical or conceptual tradition. These problems reflect the task of researching a body of literature which itself is formed from a range of disciplines. To conduct this study, a methodology was required which engaged critically with the theoretical discourses contained within literature on unrecognised states and at the same time handled other forms of analysis and data associated with diverse disciplinary

content. In drawing material from such a wide range of approaches, this study has had to operate within analytical parameters which have tended to cut across academic disciplines. The chapter structure and selection of sources is a reflection of this. This thesis is, therefore, a compromise between different disciplinary traditions and is not specifically a work belonging to any one discipline but can be regarded as a work of critical ethno-politics which uses an interdisciplinary methodology to arrive at its conclusions. The work of an originator in any subject is bound to have its limitations and this study reflects many of the meta-theoretical complications and limitations inherent in the conceptual analysis of unrecognised entities. The conceptual proposals of the study will, it is hoped, be of some service, but they are issued with the expectation that emerging realities in unrecognised entities and future trends in global politics will improve their accuracy and increase their utility.

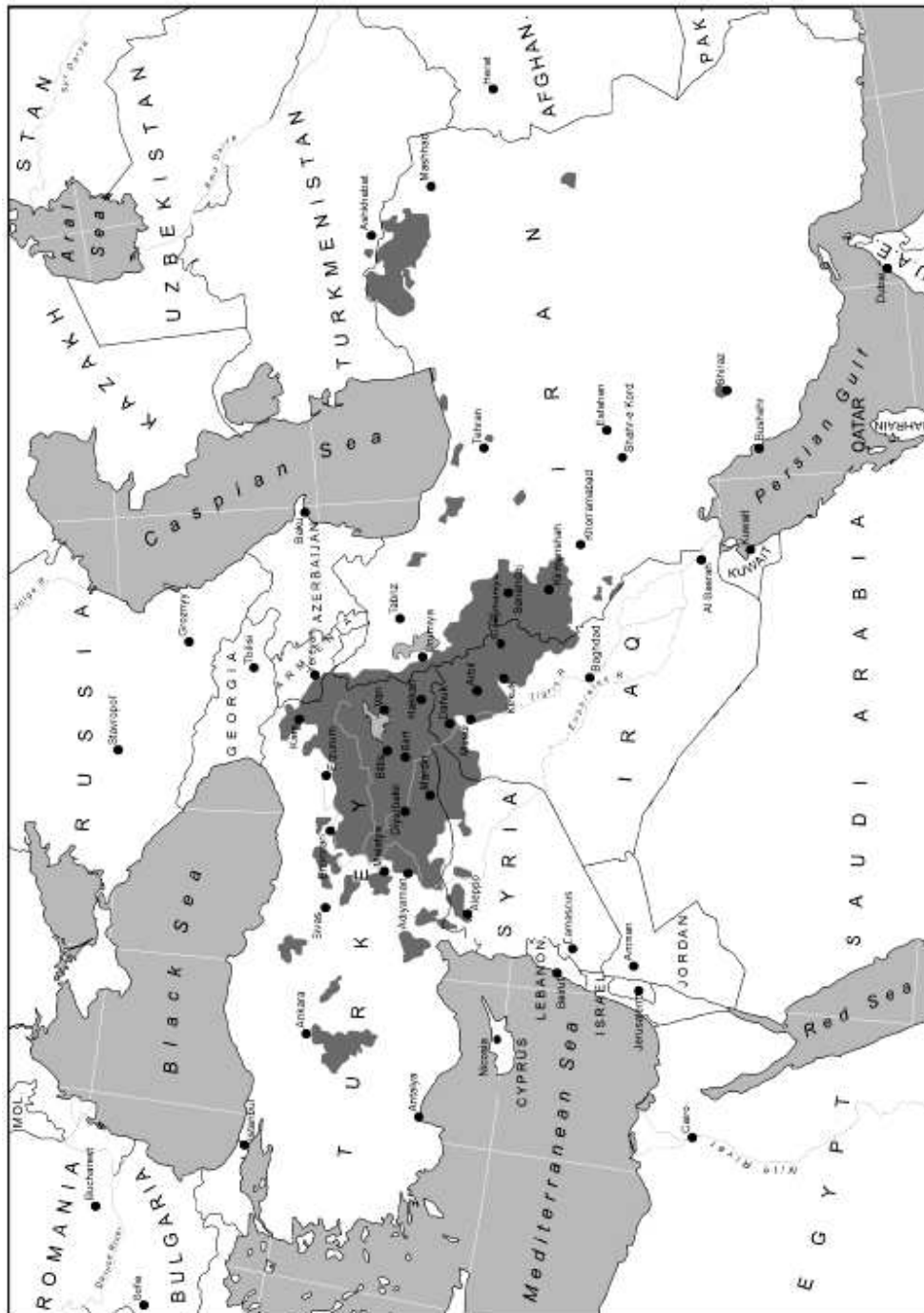
From the outset the example of Iraqi Kurdistan is highlighted as a case which displaces significantly many of the core conceptual assumptions and generalisations used to depict unrecognised entities in earlier work. As a study dedicated to examining Iraqi Kurdistan's position as an unrecognised entity within Iraq and also the intrastate dynamics between Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, this thesis makes a significant contribution by expanding the study of unrecognised entities to accommodate this regional example. Very little analysis of Iraqi Kurdistan's position as an unrecognised entity is contained within the literature due to empirical focus on post-Soviet break away republics and unrecognised entities outside the Middle East. This is possibly due to lack of expertise in Iraqi Kurdistan being brought to bear on the question of unrecognised states in general. This thesis makes a significant contribution to knowledge by placing Iraqi Kurdistan within the framework of debates on unrecognised entities, and using its example as a case which necessitates the theoretical modification of existing approaches. Unrecognised states are global phenomena for which generalisations hewn in post-Soviet space no longer contain sufficient latitude. In fact, as argued in the final chapter, the political development of unrecognised entities in Eurasia and the Caucasus challenges the states 'in all but name' thesis and urges a full reappraisal of approaches toward unrecognised entities given evolving realities which now contradict conventional wisdom. Realities such as the *de facto* regionalisation and absorption of Abkhazia and South Ossetia into a Russian sphere of influence are posited alongside Iraqi Kurdistan's

non-secessionist *de facto* independence as dynamics which destabilise the narrow parameters of many arguments contained in earlier literature.

Whilst earlier research may have anticipated the presence of dynamics of this sort, few explicit conceptual attempts were forthcoming which questioned the difference between *de facto* independent enclaves and the concept of the state with which they were being equated. It was as if this distinction was unimportant or never existed at all. This thesis is a response to this lack of theoretical engagement and its findings are a reflection of the importance of recognising differences which, if not apparent to the empirical gaze, are of significant theoretical leverage. This is an important finding of this study as it has highlighted problems of disconnect between disciplines, methodologies, discourses, and theories within the study of unrecognised entities. A finding of this thesis is that this level of theoretical fragmentation can be lessened through analysis of *de facto* independence as a dynamic which determines the longevity and survivability of unrecognised entities wherever they are encountered in the interstate system. This departure from secessionist definitions (which ultimately demand the creation of states as an intent) to a conceptual model which emphasises the maintenance of *de facto* independence, radically alters the criteria through which we can perceive unrecognised entities in the international system and will be of great significance for future research into issues such as the geo-economics of *de facto* independence and new forms of territorial revision yet to manifest in this century.

Appendices

Appendix 1



Areas of significant Kurdish population (darkened) in the Middle East and south-west Asia.

Appendix 2



Map showing Kurdish controlled areas of northern Iraq and concentrations of territory controlled by the KDP and the PUK circa 2003. The map provides a general representation of the territory which comprises the Kurdish *de facto* independent entity within Iraq.

Bibliography

- Acemoglu, D., and Robinson, J. A. 'Paths of Economic and Political Development'; in Weingast, B. R., and Wittman, D. A. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)
- Ahmadzadeh, Hashem. *Nation and Novel: A Study of Persian and Kurdish Narrative Discourse* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2003)
- Ahmed, M. M. A., and Gunter, M. (eds.). *The Kurdish Question and the 2003 Iraqi War* (Mazda Publishers Inc., 2005)
- Althusser, Louis. *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984)
- , 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)'; in Žižek, Slavoj (ed.) *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 106- 140
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991)
- Anderson, Lawrence M. 'Exploring the paradox of autonomy: federalism and secession in North America,' *Regional & Federal Studies*, 14:1, 2004, pp. 89-112
- Anderson, Liam, and Stansfield, Gareth. *The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)
- Athanasiadis, Iason. 'The Kurdish Defection', *Asia Times*, 24.03.2006.
<<http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=11748>> Accessed 06.05.08
- Bahcheli, T., Bartmann, B., and Srebrnik, H. (eds.). *De Facto States: The Quest for Sovereignty* (London: Routledge, 2004)
- , & Fragiskatos, P. 'Iraqi Kurdistan: Fending off uneasy neighbours', *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*, 2:1, 2008, pp. 67-82.
- Bartelson, Jens. *The Critique of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 11.
- Berg, Eiki. 'Pooling Sovereignty, Losing Territoriality? Making Peace in Cyprus and Moldova', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 97:3, 2006, pp. 222-236.
- Best, Ulrich. 'Gnawing at the Edges of the State: Deleuze and Guattari and Border Studies'; in Eiki Berg & Henk Van Houtum (eds.), *Routing Borders Between Territories, Discourses and Practices* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003)

- Biersteker J. and Weber C. (eds.) *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- Brenner, Neil. *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Burchell, G., Gordon, C. and Miller, P. (eds.). *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991)
- Burnham, P., Gilland, K., Grant, W., and Layton-Henry, Z. *Research Methods in Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)
- Buttin, Félix. 'A Human Security Perspective on Transnistria: Reassessing the situation within the "Black Hole of Europe"', *Human Security Journal*, 3, 2007.
- Camilleri, Joseph A. 'Rethinking Sovereignty in a Shrinking, Fragmented World'; in Walker & Mendlovitz (eds.) *Contending Sovereignties: Rethinking Political Community* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990).
- Caney, S. 'National self-determination and national secession: individualist and communitarian approaches'; in P. Lehning (Ed.), *Theories of Secession* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 151-80
- Carver, Natasha. 'Is Iraq/Kurdistan a State such that it can be Said to Operate State Systems and Thereby Offer Protection to its 'Citizens'?', *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 14:1, 2002, pp. 57-84.
- Caspersen, Nina. 'Standards before status in the Caucasus: State-building and democratization in Nagorno Karabakh and Abkhazia', Unpublished, 2007
- , 'From Kosovo to Karabakh: International Responses to De Facto States', *Südosteuropa*, 56:1, 2008.
- Chorev, Matan. 'Iraqi kurdistan: The Internal Dynamics and Statecraft of a Semistate', *Al Nakhlah Online Journal*, The Fletcher School \ Tufts University, Fall 2007.
<http://se2.isn.ch/serviceengine/Files/.../3_Matan_Chorev_AN.pdf> Accessed 13.11.2009
- Conversi, Daniele. 'Central Secession: towards a new analytical concept? The case of former Yugoslavia', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26:2, April 2000, pp. 333-355.
- Cornell, Svante E. 'Autonomy and Conflict: Ethnoterritoriality and Separatism in the South Caucasus – Cases in Georgia', *Department of Peace and Conflict Research Report No. 61*, Uppsala, 2002.

- Costa, Josep. 'On Theories of Secession: Minorities, Majorities and the Multinational State', *CRISPP*, 6:2, Summer 2003, pp. 63-90.
- Crocker, Bathsheba. 'Restructuring Iraq's Economy', *The Washington Quarterly*, 27:4, 2004 pp. 73-93
- Csanadi, M., and Bunce, V. 'A Systematic Analysis of a Non-System: Post-Communism in Eastern Europe', *Sisyphus – Social Studies*, 3:1, (Warsaw: IPS Publishers, 1992); cited in Wnuk-Lipiński, E. 'The Vicissitudes of the market principle'. *International Social Science Journal*, 140, 1994, pp. 185-200
- Dahlman, Carl. 'The Political Geography of Kurdistan', *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 43:4, 2002.
- De Boer, A., and Leezenberg, M. (eds.). *Iraqi Kurdistan: The Need for Durable Development* (Amsterdam: Netherlands Kurdistan Society, 1993)
- Der Derian, James (ed.). *International Theory: Critical Investigations* (London: Palgrave, 1995)
- Devetak, Richard. 'Between Kant and Pufendorf: humanitarian intervention, statist anti-cosmopolitanism and critical international theory', *Review of International Studies*, 33 2007, 151-174
- Edkins, Jenny. *Poststructuralism and International Relations* (Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 1999)
- Eppel, Michael. 'Kurdish leadership in Iraq: facing the challenges, the dangers, and the chances of post-Saddam Iraq'; Panel Paper delivered at Exeter University International Conference: *The Kurds and Kurdistan: History, Politics, Culture*. (3 April 2009).
- Fairclough, Norman. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995)
- Falk, Richard. 'Evasions of Sovereignty'; in Walker & Mendlovitz (eds.), *Contending Sovereignties: Redefining Political Community* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1990).
- Fawcett, Louise. 'Down but not out? The Kurds in International Politics', *Review of International Studies*, 27, 2001, pp. 109-188.
- Ferguson, Yale H., and Mansbach, Richard W. *Remapping Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- Foucault, Michel. *Governmentality* (1991); in G. Burchell et al. (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 87-104

- Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the last man* (New York: Perennial, 2002)
- Gahramanova, Aytan. 'Peace strategies in "frozen" ethno-territorial conflicts: integrating reconciliation into conflict management – The case of Nagorno Karabakh', Mannheim Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung, *Working Paper No. 103*, (2007).
- Gomulka, S. 'Economic and Political Constraints During Transition', *Mimeo* (1993); in Wnuk-Lipiński, E. 'The Vicissitudes of the market principle'. *International Social Science Journal*, 140, (1994), pp. 185-200
- Gryzmal-Busse, A., and Jones Luong, P. 'Democratization: Post-Communist Implications'; in Weingast, B. R., and Wittman, D. A. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)
- Gunter, Michael. *The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq: A political Analysis* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999)
- Hechter, Michael. 'The Dynamics of Secession', *Acta Sociologica*, 35, 1992, pp. 267-283
- Hedges, Chris. 'Kurdish Smugglers Blow Smoke Rings over Northern Iraq,' *New York Times* (Online), August 17, 1994.
<<http://www.nytimes.com/1994/08/17/world/kurdish-smugglers-blow-smoke-rings-over-northern-iraq.html>> Accessed 10.05.09.
- Holsti, K. J. *The Dividing Discipline* (London: Unwin Hyman Inc., 1985)
- Howard, Michael. 'Kurds Flee Homes as Iran Shells Iraq's northern frontier', *The Guardian*, 18.08.2006. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/aug/18/iraq.iran>> Accessed 03.05.2010
- Inayatullah, Naeem. 'Beyond the sovereignty dilemma: quasi-states as a social construct', in J. Biersteker & C. Weber (eds.) *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- Jackson, Robert H. *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
- Khayati, Khalid. 'Newroz: When "La joie de vivre" and Suffering Coincide,' *The Kurdish Globe*, No. 102, March 19, 2007, p. 2.
<<http://www.kurdishglobe.net/servlet/WritePDFServlet?ID=49>> Accessed 12.05.2009.
- King, Charles. 'The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognised States,' *World Politics*, 53:4, (2001).

- Kolossov, Kladimir & O'Loughlin, John. 'Pseudo-States as Harbingers of a New Geopolitics: The Example of the Trans-Dniester Moldovan Republic (TMR)', in D. Newman (ed.) *Boundaries, Territory, and Postmodernity* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 151-176.
- Kolstø, Pål. 'The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognised Quasi-States,' *Journal of Peace Research*, 43:6 (2006), pp. 723-740
- & Helge Blakkisrud, 'Living with Non-recognition: State- and Nation-building in South Caucasian Quasi-states,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60:3, (May 2008), pp. 483-509
- Krasner, Stephen D. 'Abiding Sovereignty,' *International Political Science Review*, 22:3, (2001), pp. 229-251.
- Leezenberg, Michiel. 'Iraqi Kurdistan: contours of a post-civil war society', *Third World Quarterly*, 26:4-5, 2005, pp. 631-647.
- , 'Urbanisation, Privatisation, and Patronage: The Political Economy of Iraqi Kurdistan'; in Jabar, F. A., and Dawod, H. (eds.) *The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics* (London: Saqi Books, 2006)
- Lefort, Claude. *The Political Forms of Modern Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1986)
- Lynch, Dov. *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2004)
- , 'Separatist States and post-Soviet Conflicts', *International Affairs*, 78:4, 2002, pp. 831-848
- Magnusson, Warren. 'The Reification of Political Community', in Walker & Mendlovitz (eds.) *Contending Sovereignities: Rethinking Political Community* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990).
- Meadwell, Hudson. 'Secession, States and International Society,' *Review of International Studies*, 25, (1999), pp. 371-387.
- Mills, Sara. *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1997)
- Morgenthau, Hans. 'The Intellectual and Political Functions of Theory' (1970); in Der Derian J. (ed.) *International Theory: Critical Investigations* (London: Palgrave, 1995), p. 38.
- Morse, Edward. *Modernization and the Transformation of International Relations* (New York: The Free Press, 1976)

- Newman, D. ed. *Boundaries, Territory, and Postmodernity* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1999)
- Niblock, T., and Murphy, E. (eds.). *Economic and Political Liberalisation in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1993)
- Offe, C. 'The Politics of Social Policy in East European Transitions: Antecedents, Agents, and Agenda of Reforms', Bremen: *Zentrum für Sozialpolitik, Mimeo*; cited in Wnuk-Lipiński, E. 'The Vicissitudes of the market principle', *International Social Science Journal*, 140, 1994, pp. 185-200
- O'Leary, Brendan. 'Analysing Partition: Definition, Classification And Explanation', *MFPP Working Papers*, 27, 2006.
- Omrčanin, M. *Norway, Sweden, Croatia: A Comparative Study of State Secession and Formation* (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Co., 1976)
- Palmer, Monte. Book Review. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 33:3, 2001, pp. 469-70.
- Park, Bill. 'The Kurds and post-Saddam political arrangements in Iraq', *Adelphi Series*, 45:374, 2005, pp. 29-48.
- Paul, Darel E. 'Sovereignty, Survival and the Westphalian blind alley in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 25, 1999, pp. 217-231
- Pegg, Scott. 'De Facto States in the International System'. Institute of International Relations – University of British Columbia, Working Paper No. 21, 1998.
- . *International Society and the De Facto State* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998)
- . 'The 'Taiwan of the Balkans'? The *De Facto* State Option for Kosova', *Southeast European Politics*, 1:2, December 2000, pp. 90-100.
- Picarelli, John T. 'The Turbulent Nexus of Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism: A Theory of International Relations,' *Global Crime*, 7:1, 2006.
- Popescu, Nicu. "'Outsourcing' *de facto* Statehood: Russia and the Secessionist Entities in Georgia and Moldova', Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), *Policy Brief*, No. 109, July 2006.
- . 'The End of "De Facto States"', *EU Observer Blog*, 13 July 2009, <http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_the_end_of_de_facto_states/> Accessed 14.12.2010
- Przeworski, A. *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

- '. 'Political Dynamics of Economic Reforms: East and South'; cited in Wnuk-Lipiński, E. 'The Vicissitudes of the market principle', *International Social Science Journal*, 140, 1994, pp. 185-200
- '. 'Self-Enforcing Democracy'; in Weingast, B. R., and Wittman, D. A. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)
- Rittberger, Volker. 'Research on International Regimes in Germany: The Adaptive Internalization of an American Social Science Concept', in Volker Rittberger & Peter Mayer, *Regime Theory and International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2002).
- Rosenau, James N. *The Study of Global Interdependence* (London: Pinter, 1980)
- '. *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990)
- '. *Distant Proximities: Dynamics Beyond Globalization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)
- Rothschild, J. *Ethnopolitics* (Columbia University Press, 1981)
- Seddon, D. 'Austerity protests in response to economic liberalization in the Middle East'; in Niblock, T., and Murphy, E. (eds.) *Economic and Political Liberalisation in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1993).
- Skarstein, Rune. 'Free Trade: A Dead End for Underdeveloped Economies', *Review of Political Economy*, 19:3, 2007, pp. 347-367
- Smith, A. D. *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Polity Press, 2006).
- Stansfield, G. *Iraqi Kurdistan: Political development and emergent democracy* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003)
- '. *Iraq* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007)
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (ed.), *Discourse as Structure and Process* (London: SAGE, 1997)
- Van Schendel, Willem. 'Stateless in South Asia: The making of the India-Bangladesh Enclaves', in Eiki Berg & Henk Van Houtum (eds.), *Routing Borders Between Territories, Discourses and Practices* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).
- Walker, Edward. 'No Peace, No War in the Caucasus: Secessionist Conflicts in Chechnya, Abkhazia and Nagorno Karabakh'. *Centre for Science and International Affairs*, Occasional Paper, February 1998.

- Walker, R. B. J. & Mendlovitz, Saul H. (eds.) *Contending Sovereignties: Rethinking Political Community* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990)
- Weingast, B. R., and Wittman, D. A. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)
- Weller, Marc. 'The Self-Determination Trap', *Ethnopolitics*, 4:1, March 2005, pp. 3-28.
- , 'Kosovo's Final Status', *International Affairs*, 84:6, 2008, pp. 1223-1243
- Wnuk-Lipiński, E. 'The Vicissitudes of the market principle', *International Social Science Journal*, 140, 1994, pp. 185-200
- Wright, Martin. 'Why is There No International Theory?' (1966). cited in Der Derian J. (ed.), *International Theory: Critical Investigations* (London: Palgrave, 1995)
- Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989)
- , (ed.). *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994)
- , *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 2008)

Websites and Selected Electronic Resources

- Athanasiadis, Iason. 'The Kurdish Defection', *Asia Times*, 24.03.2006,
<<http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=11748>>
Accessed 06.05.08
- Economist.com. *Does Independence Beckon?* Print edition, September 6th 2007,
<http://www.economist.com/world/africa/story_id=9769132>
Accessed 15.10.2007.
- Kurdistan Regional Government (Kurdistan Development Corporation).
Kurdistan – The Other Iraq, <<http://www.theotheriraq.com/index.html>>
Accessed 17.05.2010
- Kurdistan Regional Government. *The Kurdistan Region – Invest in the Future*
2008 Edition, Newsdesk Media Inc., Washington D.C., 2008
<www.krg.org/uploads/documents/Invest_in_the_Future_2008.pdf>
Accessed 21.01.2009
- United Nations Office for the Iraq Programme / Oil-For-Food
<<http://www.un.org/Depts/oip/>>
Accessed 20.11.2008

UNPO Declaration on De Facto States / Opening the World Order to De Facto States,
UNPO, <<http://www.unpo.org/content/view/8144/244/>>
Accessed 18.01.2010