INDEPENDENT KOSOVO.
AN ATTEMPT OF NEOREALIST VIEW

Ancuța-Gabriela Tarța*

Abstract:
This paper focuses on the reaction of the international community to the proclamation of Kosovo as an independent state, in an attempt to demonstrate the relevance of the realist theories in the contemporary international relations. The intention is to prove that the realist theory of international relations, in its “neo” version, can explain the international situation created by the independence of Kosovo in a non-contradictory way.

Key words: realism, independence, international system, state interest, security dilemma

Looking at Kosovo’s Independence through Neorealist Lens¹

At a quick glance, the independence of Kosovo seems to contradict the realist theories. The fragmentation of an existing state, as a result of its internal contradictions and conflicts can be interpreted as an indicator of the fact that the state is a less viable entity on the international system today. However, before we proclaim its obsolescence, we have to take a closer look. Kosovo’s break up with Serbia was only with the purpose of creating another state. The case-study will

* Ancuța-Gabriela Tarța is Assistant professor at the Department of Journalism, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca since February 2009; Currently a PhD student, research topic: “The Media and the European Construction Process”, Babes-Bolyai University; Master in Media Communication, Babeș-Bolyai University, 2009; Bachelor degree in International Relations and European Studies (Babeș-Bolyai University, Faculty of European Studies, 2008) and Journalism (Department of Journalism, Babeș-Bolyai University, 2008); Areas of interest: European journalism, social communication, media studies, international relations.

¹ As well as identifying and exploiting the existing neorealist theory, we will try to prove that being open to changes not only does not affect the theory in a negative way, but it makes it even more applicable today.
focus on two major points: firstly, the situation of Kosovo’s separation. Secondly, the international reaction to Kosovo’s independence in an attempt to prove that, regardless of whether states accept or not the independence of Kosovo, the neorealist theories can explain their position. Simply put, either accepting a new state or recognizing just the original one, means validating the realist theory in the international relations (IR).

Neo-realism’s main focus is on the structure of the international system. Unlike classical realism, which sympathizes with the constraints of the anarchical system, neo-realism is more focused on explaining its structure and internal liaisons. For Realism, the important thing is what states do with their foreign policies, as foreign policies make the international relations. The ultimate emphasis is on the state. As neo-realists see it, “the realist error was to suppose that no clear distinction between the system of states and the nature of the sovereign units could be drawn”. Simply put, the international relations and the foreign policies of the states are not overlapping concepts. This is the basic premise of neo-realism today.

One basic view expressed by realism (also in its neo version), is that the issues of security, power and state interest have always been the main principles of action in the international system. But while for classical realism war among states is always imminent, because of the security dilemma, neo-realism sees things a bit differently. As a matter of fact, it has to do so, in order to keep itself among the top theories of the contemporary international relations. It is rather easy for anyone able to make sense of the international reality to see that war among states is not really imminent today. Far from being a perfect world, we can agree the international system today is one of the quietest in history, from the point of view of interstate conflicts.

Neo-realists find the reasons for international behavior in the anarchical structure of the international system. So far, nothing wrong. However, we consider there is one crucial thing neo-realism has to look at when trying to explain situations like the independence of Kosovo. That is, that war may be less imminent among states, but it is more imminent, for different reasons, inside states, between territories and communities that want to become states. Two points have to be made here. One is that (neo) realism has its inconsistencies. One of them is the assumption that states always act as unitary actors. The internal problems of a state influence its behavior at the international level, because they shape the state’s

---

3 From Kenneth Waltz (“Theory of International Politics”, 1979), up to the present.
interests and, therefore, its international behavior or response to certain situations. There are many examples in this way. However, these internal problems are assumed by the states as such and tried to be solved. The problems big enough to burst out and generate international echo are usually like the one we discuss in our study: those of a community being unsatisfied with the governments’ policies and seeking to achieve its own sovereignty.

This brings us to the second point that has to be made. Apparently, in this kind of situation, the problems of a state are solved through the separation of the problematic region, more precisely through the creation of another state. All the communities, regions, territories and separatist movements inside a state that fight against the legitimacy of the government and its policies ultimately want the same thing: independence and sovereignty. Simply put, they fight for exactly the same thing they challenge in the state that encloses them.

The simplest and most viable solution to a state’s serious internal problems is the creation of another state. What proof can be more valuable for the relevance of neorealist theories today? In a world that highly promotes globalism and interdependence, states are being built under our own eyes. The struggle remains one for power, the power that gives independence, security and legitimacy. The state becomes, in these conditions, a purpose in itself.

In our attempt of neorealist view, we will mainly focus on three major concepts: state interest (power in terms of interest), the international context (or structure of the international system) and the security dilemma. Analyzing Kosovo’s independence from a realist perspective of the IR does not mean accepting or rejecting it. Because today Kosovo is de facto an independent state, a reality. The question is how was this reality possible?

In order to answer this, neo-realists have to agree on the following point: once an internal problem of a state becomes an international issue, it cannot be considered simply an internal matter of that state anymore. This is obviously the situation of Kosovo. As we know from history, the attempts to solve the situation

---

4 A state that faces ethnic problems, for example, will support another one in the same situation. However, let us not forget this benevolent and sympathetic attitude is originated in the state’s interest and it can therefore change according to it.

5 One example that comes to mind is that of India supporting both sides in the Sri Lankan conflict, according to its interests. Hoping to gain international prestige and regional power, India initially supported the Tamil leaders in their fight for independence. Later, being afraid of similar claims from its own Tamil minority, it stepped to the other side, supporting the government in Colombo.

6 “Solved” is a way of referring to it, as it is obvious that the respective state does not consider the separation of its territory, no matter how problematic, as a good solution.
in Kosovo diplomatically have continuously failed. The only thing that gave results was the realist use of force. From a neorealist perspective, the situation in Kosovo was for years in row a security dilemma. It is not a dilemma between states, but inside a state, between ethnical groups. In the case of Kosovo, the ethnical tensions between the Serbs and the Albanians generated fear for both sides. For the Serbian government there was the fear of losing Kosovo in favor of its neighbor, Albania, with whom it had territorial disputes from the creation of the Yugoslavian state. Moreover, the government in Belgrade was also afraid that the increasing tensions in the Balkans would attract the international reaction (as it actually happened) and interference in its internal matters. On the other side, the Kosovar Albanians feared the intervention of the government from Belgrade, whom they barely recognized and accepted. They also feared international reaction, as long as that could mean a rejection of their claims for independence as a violation of state sovereignty. This dilemma was somehow kept under control in Tito’s years. But in the context of Yugoslavia falling apart, it evolved and eventually led to international war.

The long Kosovo war left the situation only partially solved. The Albanian community in Kosovo was already acting as a separate state with separate interests from the ones of the Serbian government. The Self-Proclaimed Assembly of Kosovo was adopting resolutions in the name of community it governed. Although declared illegal several times by the Belgrade authorities, it did not cease its activity. The interest of Kosovar Albanians was to obtain independence, an interest totally opposed to the one of the Serbian state who could no longer offer autonomy without affecting its territorial and communitarian integrity. The ultimate interest of any state is its self-preservation (survival) and integrity, as well as the protection and security of its people. In this particular situation, the interests of Serbia and Kosovo (which was acting as a separate government which knows what’s good for its people) were divergent.

The logical (realist) consequence was therefore for Kosovo to break up with Serbia, as it considered that this is the best way of representing the interests of its citizens. At the same time, it is absolutely obvious that this decision will not be accepted by the Serbian government, for which it is a violation of sovereignty.

---

7 The most significant was the Rambouillet Conference, held in February/March 1999, with the purpose of ending the Kosovo war. However, the Serbian government did not sign the agreement.
They said “I do”

When the Self-Proclaimed Assembly of Kosovo publicly declared the independent Republic of Kosovo⁸, on February 17ᵗʰ 2008, it knew it could definitely count on some serious unconditional support. And it was not anyone’s support, but the support of probably (still) the world’s greatest power: the United States of America. That is way, although unilateral, the “yes” Kosovo said to its own independence from Serbia was a strong and decided one.

By the 31ˢᵗ of March 2009, Kosovo⁹ was recognized by 56 out of the 192 UN member states.¹⁰ Among the states that recognized the independence of Kosovo without any other amendments the United States take the first place. This reaction was expected. As we could see in the theoretical part, many American political and IR analysts supported the independence of Kosovo as the only solution to finally put an end to violence. From a realist point of view, the USA support for Kosovo’s independence is a direct result of its interests in the Balkans. Through the intervention in Kosovo, the United States showed the world that being a super power gives you enough credit to act as you wish. NATO’s intervention in Kosovo did not initially have a UN mandate, although the declared reason for intervention was the violation of human rights in the region. Moreover, if we were to take into consideration NATO’s anatomy, structure and purpose, there would have been no reason for the organization to intervene there. However, the mighty easily imposed its interest in this case.

Recognizing the independence of Kosovo was, as we said, expected from the United States. At the Rambouillet Conference, the Americans supported the Albanian side more or less explicitly. At a first glance, the main reasons (publicly declared) are the following: the right of auto determination of the people in Kosovo, putting an end to the eternal conflict between Serbs and Albanians and pacifying the Balkan area. From a realist pint of view, however, the interest of the United States is the one that can validly explain the reaction.

It is clear that nothing pressured the American in recognizing Kosovo: neither security, nor survival issues. But in the context of the international role the United States adopted, that of promoting peace, security, democracy and human rights, its reaction could not have been neutral. During the UN and NATO

---

⁸ The new name of the independent state.
⁹ The name given to the newly of the independent state.
¹⁰ Kosovo thanks the states that recognized it on a website entitled: “Kosovo thanks you”, available at [http://www.kosovothanksyou.com], accessed March 31ˢᵗ 2009.
administration of Kosovo,\textsuperscript{11} the US, which financed and ran most of the operations, had control over the region. Now, by recognizing Kosovo, it further increases its power and influence in the region, its position being the same with the other ex-Yugoslavian countries and Albania.

One of USA’s major interests is that of NATO enlargement. Realists don’t believe in the effectiveness of the international organizations. Not unless they are essentially driven by a great power. Like the United States. As the 2008 Summit in Bucharest proved, the organization seems to be in continuous expansions, in areas and for purposes that are outside the ones initially established by the North-Atlantic Treaty. If we were to look at the initial core objective of NATO, which was the defense against the Soviet Union, than its presence on the international stage after the Soviet collapse in 1990 could not be easily explained. However, the USA quickly found another purpose for NATO, probably anticipating the existential issues that could threaten the alliance: NATO became the organization in charged with defending Europe. Who or what was threatening the Europe? It appeared, it the context of Balkan wars (Bosnia 1992-1995, Kosovo 1996-1999), that Europe was threatened by itself. More recently, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in New York, the role of NATO was again re-invented: the fight against global terrorism.

The continuous re-invention of NATO’s role and its enlargement attempts can be interpreted as a legitimacy crisis of the organization. This idea is also induced by the fact that several member countries have redrawn their troops from NATO operation areas. A valid neorealist explanation of this kind of action is that these states do not consider it to be in their interest to risk the lives of their soldiers for that specific NATO purpose. However, by recognizing and supporting the independence of Kosovo, the USA supports its major objective of strengthening NATO. Kosovo, as well as the other ex-Yugoslavian republics and states from the Balkans who said “yes” to the newly independent state, is a possible candidate for NATO enlargement.

Nonetheless, the influence of the United States in NATO is visible if we look at the fact that 21 out of the 26 NATO member states recognized the independent Republic of Kosovo. The ones who did not, as we will see, had serious reasons not to do it.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} Since June 1999, when the UN Security Council Resolution no. 1244 placed Kosovo under transitional UN administration.

\textsuperscript{12} NATO member states which did not recognize Kosovo (yet?) are Greece, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain.
Since we got to the American continent, Canada also recognized Kosovo on March 18th 2008. We cannot talk about special and particular Canadian interests in Kosovo or in the Balkans. However, Canada has been a traditional USA partner, especially in NATO. Moreover, the recognition of Kosovo would not negatively affect the Canadian interests in any way. If we were to look at it from a neorealist perspective, Canada’s reaction can be interpreted as forward: recognizing or not recognizing Kosovo does not have any kind effect on Canadian interests on the short run. However, on the long run, the recognition of Kosovo seems more “profitable” than the non-recognition, especially since the traditional partner, the USA, determinedly recognized Kosovo.

A similar position was adopted by Australia, who took less time than Canada to consider its interests and recognized Kosovo on February 19, 2008. In this case, the traditional partnership with the United States of America and with the United Kingdom definitely had an influence on Australia’s position, as it can be seen from the recognition text: “Australia respects the decision of the people of Kosovo. The United States and the United Kingdom have also indicated their recognition of Kosovo’s new sovereignty, and a number of others are expected to do so soon”.13

In its turn, the United Kingdom gave Kosovo a “yes” on the next day after its proclamation of independence. As in the case of USA, Britain’s position was more than predictable. Firstly, if we look at history, the UK has continuously had the same position regarding Yugoslavia as the USA (see Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo war). The British interests have most of the times identified themselves with the American ones. Kosovo was not an exception. France’s position was similar (and immediate – February 18) and for similar reasons, if we were to take into consideration the support France gives to NATO.

A special “I do” was given to Kosovo by the ex-Yugoslavian countries, with the exception of Bosnian and Herzegovina, which we will deal with later. Slovenia said yes to Kosovo on March 5. Its position was, however, different from the one expressed by Croatia, the latest taking more time in recognizing the new state (March 19th). Both states gained independence from former Yugoslavia in 1991. The historical background is therefore similar. Why, then, the difference of opinion? In this case, we can use both historical and structural realist views to explain it. From the point of view of historical realists there are no general guidelines for acting in the international system. The responses and actions of a state are contextual. For

Slovenia, a member of the European Union (whose presidency it held at the moment of Kosovo’s proclamation of independence), the context was different than for Croatia. EU membership means, first of all, more support for the country, both internally and externally (international backup). Slovenia therefore tried to mobilize the other countries of the Union in recognizing Kosovo, as well trying to strengthen relations with Serbia. Obviously, this is very hard to achieve. But at the same time, it is very relevant for the position of the European Union, whose interests Slovenia at this point represents. Being first of all a conglomerate of peoples and cultures, the European Union cannot adopt a partisan position, supporting only one of the sides. Therefore, Slovenia acted consistently with the international context and recognized Kosovo, as well as trying to maintain good relations with Serbia.

In its turn, Croatia recognized Kosovo a bit later. The decision was not simple, but it was consistent with Croatian interests. Being a former Yugoslavian country which obtained independence and international recognition is good reason to sympathize with the Kosovo Albanian cause. At the same time, Croatian-Serbian relations have been rather good (especially economic relations). Also, Croatia is hoping to be accepted in the European Union. In this international context, its interests are mainly two: maintain positive relations with the neighbors (firstly) and be consistent with the position of the EU. As a result, Croatia recognized Kosovo, while at the same time addressing the Serbian government, in the hope of further maintaining good relations.

In a structural neorealist interpretation, the anarchical structure of the international system is the one that determines similar reactions from the states. This assumption is valid if we look at the countries from former Yugoslavia. They all (except Bosnia) recognized or will recognize Kosovo, since they are all influenced, ultimately, by the same context. Macedonia and Montenegro have not recognized the Republic of Kosovo yet, but they both made announcements that they will in the near future. Moreover, as we know from the theoretical part, neorealists are not particularly concerned with the problem of state sovereignty. From this angle, the reaction of the former Yugoslavian states (as well as the others who said “yes” to Kosovo) matches the realist assumptions: state interest above everything else. Another crucial point worth taking into consideration is the security issue. During the past two decades, the Balkans has been a centre on insecurity and instability which created a security dilemma for the states of the region (and not only for them). There are high hopes that with the independence of Kosovo the tensions of the region will finally end. In a realist calculation, the
benefits of an independent Kosovo are higher than the losses. More precisely, the only one who has something serious to lose is Serbia.

Last but definitely not least, Albania was probably one of the most decided countries in recognizing Kosovo as independent from Serbia. It would be superfluous to analyze the reasons here, as we have done throughout the historical exposé. It is useful to say also that Albania was the only state who recognized Kosovo’s proclamation of independence in 1990. Albania’s interests in Kosovo are directed towards a future union. The rest, as we say, is history. Just for sustaining what we said, let us take a look at Albania’s declaration of recognition: “The Government of the Republic of Albania considers the creation of the State of Kosovo as a historical event, sanctioning the right of Kosovo citizens for self-determination and makes the Balkans freer and fairer than ever throughout its history of a century. Independence of Kosovo puts an end to disintegration process of Yugoslavia, creates essential conditions for constant development of the entire Kosovar society, including its concrete perspective for quick integration in European and Euro-Atlantic integration. After the Declaration of Independence, the Republic of Kosovo turns into a dignified actor in international arena, major factor of peace and stability in the region, clearly Euro Atlantic-oriented, important factor of peace, stability, security, development and harmonized integration of Southeastern Europe region”.

We cannot go further without analyzing the positions of the Asian states that said recognized the independence of Kosovo. Among them, Japan said “yes” on the 18th of March 2008. The Asian power does not have particular interests in the Balkans and is one of the top powers of the world. Therefore, the decision to recognize Kosovo has no serious implications for the Japanese interests. All these can be deduced from the extremely short document of recognition the Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister issued: On March 18, Japan recognized the Republic of Kosovo as an independent state. As the Government of the Republic of Kosovo has made its intention clear that it will run the country pursuant to the "Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement" made by the U.N. Special Envoy, Japan expects that Kosovo’s independence will contribute to the long-lasting stability of the region. Japan has traditionally good relations with the Republic of Serbia and it has no intention to make its recognition of Kosovo

impede the friendly relations with Serbia. Japan hopes that such friendly relations with Serbia will be continued”.

These are, therefore, the countries who accepted Kosovo as an international actor. One last consideration deserves to be made here. When looking at freshly independent Kosovo with cold realist eyes, the expectations would rather be those of a non-recognition of the state. After all, the creation of a new state in the international system should not be something desired by the rest of the actors, which are interested in maximizing their power and influence. However, this does not seem to be case. This is where the principle of relative versus absolute gains comes into the scene. Simply put, everyone would have more to win from recognizing Kosovo than from not recognizing it. Plus, an independent Kosovo would not pose any problems for the international system, since we are talking about a rather poor and weak state. No threat of dominance or security troubles in the area.

This is obviously not the opinion of the countries that refused to recognize Kosovo. For them, neorealist theories can also offer a valid explanation, as we are about to see.

They said “No Way”

Just as the countries which said “yes”, the ones that openly refused to recognize Kosovo have their reasons, in terms of interests. The whole interpretation that follows promotes the following idea: these countries said “no” because, at this point, their interests required them to do as such. In realist terms, the first major interests of a state are those of survival (self-preservation) and the protection and welfare of its citizens. These are the ones which dictated the international response of the countries that said “no”.

But, as in times interests might vary and change, the answers of these states might change accordingly.

16 Except Serbia, although ultimately it is questionable whether the gains of peace and security for its citizens are not worth more than territorial integrity.
17 And if any, definitely less than Kosovo has caused so far anyway.
18 As we could see in most of the countries who recognized the independence, their primary interests (which in Realists’ view are survival and protection of their citizens) are not directly influenced by either a “yes” or a “no” answer given to Kosovo. In other words, their immediate destinies are far from depending on whether they recognize the new state or not. However, there were other interests that dictated the “yes” (economic, strategic etc).
However, there is one response highly unlikely to ever change: the one expressed by the ex-mother country of Kosovo, Serbia. We do not have to be realist thinkers to understand the basic reasons for Serbia’s “no”. What country would happily accept to give away part of its territory? Centre of the former Yugoslavian, Belgrade gradually assisted in the last two decades to the fall-apart of its empire. But the loss of the Yugoslavian republics is easier to accept than the loss of a territory that had historically been recognized as part of Serbia. The inviolability of Serbian territories, as well as the belonging of Kosovo to Serbia was internationally and officially recognized at least three times in history: 1913 (Ambassadors’ Conference in London, ending the Balkan War), in 1919-1929 (through the peace treaties at the end of the First World War), as well as at the end of the Second World War. Moreover, as we could see, the Helsinki Accords signed in 1975 were reiterating the same principles of respect of sovereignty and state territoriality, as well as non-interference in internal matters of the states. As expected, Serbia considers independent Kosovo as illegal, as well of a clear violation of its sovereignty. In a realist interpretation, Serbia’s reaction is more than natural. A state is first of all interested in survival, preservation and the well state of its people. Or, losing Kosovo means quite the opposite for Serbia.

This is the point in which realism is more than relevant. Supposing an independent Kosovo would actually mean peace and stability for the region, as well as for the Serbian people themselves. Serbia would not benevolently accept to give up part of its territory for that. State interest and preservation comes above anything else. If (as liberalists say) states are more likely to cooperate one with another rather than fight, this would be a point in which Serbia should cooperate for the stability of the region. But giving up Kosovo for general stability of the region is a matter Serbia cannot even take into consideration.

Serbia’s position was backed-up by its traditional ally, Russia. The Russian UN envoy, Vitaly Churkin, declared that there is no legal basis for the recognition of the independence of Kosovo and that a unilateral declaration should not be taken into consideration by the international community.19

Russia’s position suffers the following realist interpretations. First, as classical Realists would see it, one of Russia’s international policy main characteristics is the opposition with the United States. Despite the end of the Cold War, the American and Russian foreign policies have still remained mostly antagonistic. So one of the reasons why Russia refuses to recognize Kosovo can be

precisely this. An increased American influence in the Balkans is definitely not what Russia seeks. Nor is the strengthening of NATO. As a matter of fact, the creation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization\textsuperscript{20} (CSTO) and the Shanghai Organization for Cooperation\textsuperscript{21} (SOC), in which Moscow constitutes a basis are considered by many analysts as a reaction to NATO. Nor Russia or China declares the organizations against NATO. However, from a neorealist point of view this comes rather obvious. The anarchical structure of the international system generates similar behavior of the states. Therefore, the Russian response to NATO is a similar Asian organization. This is something Realists consider normal. It is also proof of the fact that state security issues are not an obsolete component of the international relations. More to the point, this is very likely to constitute a security dilemma.\textsuperscript{22} Russia further considers NATO intervention in Kosovo an open disrespect of UN policy and a violation of state sovereignty. At the same time, the unilateral independence of Kosovo is considered a dirty business.\textsuperscript{23}

China, as well as all the other Asian CSTO states also said “no” to Kosovo. In the case of the CSTO states, the situation is rather clear: their interests are convergent to (not to say guided by) the ones of Moscow. Having Russia as neighbor and regional power is the only ace these Asian countries have for expressing themselves at an international level. If they know what’s best for them, these states will continue to be Russia’s allies if they want to matter internationally. The precedent issue needs a closer look-at, since it is one of the core reasons for which the states which said “no” to Kosovo. Most of these states have similar internal situations. As Realists say it, the internal matters of a state should remain internal. We have agreed, basically, in the theoretical part, on the fact that we cannot totally agree with such a statement. An internal matter of a state can have serious international impact, especially when it finds echo in the internal situation of other states. This is the case of Kosovo. For the states which have similar internal situation and are therefore afraid for their preservation, integrity and security, denying independence for Kosovo and offering support for Serbia is the only option.

\textsuperscript{20} The CSTO groups countries form Asia: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Russia (the initiator).

\textsuperscript{21} This organization is controlled by Beijing and Moscow. See Petre Munteanu, “Un NATO prea indepartat?, in Foreign Policy Romania, April/May 2008, pp. 28-29.

\textsuperscript{22} Especially if we take into consideration the fact that Iran, a nuclear problematic state, wants to join both CSTO and SOC.

In our opinion, such a reaction is sufficient prove that a state’s interests come above anything else in international relations. The anarchical international system really makes it hard for states to cooperate unless they have similar interests. As we could see in the case of some countries that answered affirmatively to Kosovo’s independence (like Japan), if their interests are not seriously impacted, the “yes” rather means “I don’t care much”. However, on the long run, a “yes” seems more profitable than a “no”. The main point here is that states are likely to recognize/cooperate with other states only if they have something to win from it. Otherwise, indifference (if not hostility) are more profitable and power-preserving.

Among the countries which saw in Kosovo a (negative) example of their own future there are also Romania, Slovakia and Spain. In these countries’ cases, the “no” was a very determined one. Also, as they declared, their position is unlikely to change anywhere in the near future. For Romania, the recent internal events regarding the claim for autonomy from the counties of Harghita and Covasna[^24] weighted heavily in determining the answer given to Kosovo. So did the generally cordial relations with Belgrade. These relations are strengthened in this case by the similar interests. In its turn, Slovakia rejected the independence of Kosovo, considering it as not giving more stability to the Balkans. Having its internal problems with the autonomous Basque Country, Spain’s position could not have been any different.

What is very interesting in Romania’s case is the fact that it did not shape its answer according to the American one (which it usually does) or with the one of the majority of the EU members[^25]. One more proof of the fact that cooperation gets second place when crucial interests are in the game.

One particular situation among the countries that rejected Kosovo is the one of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This former Yugoslavian state gave its answer after a referendum in which the Bosnian people were asked what they think about Kosovo. The majority of them population (Serbian) said no. In this case, Bosnia is maybe the best example of realist behavior: a country whose main interest is survival and well-state of its people. After all, these are the main purposes which guide international behavior of state.

Nonetheless, although we could not find a specific declaration of rejection of Kosovo’s independence, we can with very little chances of error that Sri Lanka will not recognize Kosovo. The conflict between the government from Colombo and the Liberation Tamil Tigers that want independence for what they consider the

[^24]: Counties where the great majority of the population is Hungarian.
[^25]: Currently, 20 out of the 27 EU member states have formally recognized the Republic of Kosovo.
“Tamil homeland” is now continuing with the 4th Elam War. Realistically speaking, how could the government of Sri Lanka support Kosovo when it represents the worst image of what could happen to its own country?

These are only a few examples of “no” answers. Hopefully, enough to prove the connection between state interest and international position adopted by states. We will also take a look at the international actors which have not yet expressed a position on Kosovo.

**They Don’t Know What to Say**

Last, but not least, we the states and actors that did not express a clear position whether they accept or not a new state in the international system. Here it is useful to make a distinction between the states that did not specifically present a position and the actors which could not agree on a point they could express at an international level. These last ones are international organizations.

The website kosovotahnksyou.com presents a list of the state that will recognize Kosovo in a more or less intermediate future. The question that arises is how does Kosovo know that its independence will be recognized by these states, which expressed so far no announcement or intention to do so? The answer, the only one that seems viable, is the fact that these states have so far not rejected the newly independent state. In a simple deduction, if these states did not have a serious reason to object from the very beginning, it is very likely they will end by accepting Kosovo as independent. However, the most we can do when analyzing the position of these states is suppositions. And these suppositions can be based only on the interests these states might have.

We consider that the reason for which these countries have not given an answer to Kosovo yet lies in the fact that they have difficulty in shaping their interest. In other words, they are not quite sure whether recognizing Kosovo or not recognizing it is in their own interest. As we can see from the list, most countries that will recognize Kosovo at some point in the future are Third World countries. As we know, these countries have a lot of internal issues and problems which represent their immediate concern. A lot of them struggle for their own survival. The issue of the independence of Kosovo is far from them, first of all if we are to think only geographically. These former colonies of great world powers have troubles shaping their international position because they have difficulties in defining their own interests.
If we look at Annex 3, the list of the country that will “eventually recognize” Kosovo contains China and India. However, we have a lot of reasons to doubt that both these states will eventually give a “yes” to independence. In China’s case, the considerations for not recognizing Kosovo as independent are slightly different. Throughout history, the most populated state in the world had several issues that have somehow defined its international reaction in situation like this. First, there is the traditional China-Taiwan conflict. China does not recognize the government from Taipei (and has not throughout the years), while Taiwan’s position versus China resembles a state-to-state relation. In other words, although not independent, Taiwan often reacts like a sovereign entity.

Another internationally well-known issue is the one between China and Tibet. While the later claims it has a long history of independence, the first has always considered it as territorial and cultural part of it. The relations China-Tibet are rather similar with the ones Serbia-Kosovo. Knowing its sovereignty and territoriality can be even more seriously affected by an eventual independence of Tibet (since Taiwan is already acting sovereign); China cannot afford to recognize Kosovo, since it can constitute a precedent.

India’s case is similar, if we are to think only about the eternal conflicts about India and Pakistan. These states with common history and culture have fought three serious wars on territorial partitions, two of which on the region of Kashmir. It is highly unlikely that India would admit a territorial break of Serbia when it is trying to prevent one of its own. This would mean a serious inconsistence in regarding its interests. At the same time, we can remember India’s position regarding the Sri Lankan conflict. In the end, this regional power had to re-think its position in sustaining the Tamil guerrillas that seek secession. India has a region with major Tamil population that could also seek independence. As a consequence, India’s support was redirected towards the Sri Lankan government. Pakistan, on the other hand, has supported the Kosovar cause inside UN. Although it did not recognize its independence yet, it is very likely it will do so in the near future. We have yet another case of different positions expressed by states which

26 Started in 1949 and going on today. Taiwan seeks independence from China and internationally acts as such.
27 Taiwan is organizing elections and adopting independent international position and establishing relations with world states (especially with US).
have general hostile relations (in this case, India and Pakistan). From a realist point of view, this kind of behavior increases the existing hostility and intensifies the suspicions between states. This is very likely to cause further security dilemmas. The ‘Kosovo issue’ divided the international system. Thus, cooperation between states seems less and less easy to achieve.

We have so far discussed the positions of state actors regarding Kosovo’s independence. Some examples were presented in order to prove that the state interest comes before anything else. It would be interesting to take a short look at the international organizations also. As we know, realists and neo-realists consider the international organizations rather irrelevant actors, as they are mainly manipulated by a few powerful states. We will analyze the international reaction of some of these alliances and organizations. The conclusion, we hope, will be self-imposed.

The European Union did not express (as we could see by the reactions of its members) a clear position on the independence of Kosovo. Currently, 23 out of the 27 member states have recognized the Republic of Kosovo. Not at the same time, not in the same circumstances and, as we saw, highly depending on their interests. Most of the other states, as we saw, said “no”. The Union is basically divided according to the interests of its member states. EU’s incapability of answering in one clear voice, as well as its attempt to get involved while at the same time remaining neutral weakens its international value. Also, the lack of a Constitution accepted by all member states makes it rather hard for the European Union to count internationally. Technically speaking, it is actually impossible for the Union to have a unitary position regarding Kosovo. Despite what it is trying to be, the European Union remains the sum of its components – the EU member states, which are by far more influential taken separately than as part of the whole. The Common Foreign and Security Policy of the Union appear therefore to be less “common”. The question arises whether the Union can “think” separately of its member states and express an opinion of its own. At this point, our answer to this question would be no. It is vital for the coherence of the European Union that the common reaction does not contradict the position (and therefore interest) of any of the member states. As a consequence, as Javier Solana, EU’s representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy stated it, the position of the Union remains neutral, being interested only in peace and security for the region. In realist terms, this can be interpreted as a non-position, in which case the European Union does

---

29 Currently, the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon is blocked.
Independent Kosovo. An Attempt of Neorealistic View

not count as an actor at the international level, since it is highly dependent on the positions of each of its member states.

Not much different is the reaction of the United Nations. UN’s involvement in Kosovo has deeper roots, for a longer time and mainly for humanitarian purposes. But UN’s mission in Kosovo was, let us face it, nothing but a failure. In the end, it could not prevent war, mass crimes and destructions. It also could not impose the acceptance of a general solution for Kosovo. The divergent interests of UN members,\textsuperscript{30} as well as the inconsideration of UN Security Council’s decisions by some of the member states\textsuperscript{31} make the United Nations a rather weak actor of the international system. UN’s missions and purposes are laudable. However, in most cases, they fail or are only partially successful. The examples history offers in this way are many.\textsuperscript{32} Ultimately, the greatest argument realists could find against UN is the Security Council privileged membership and right of veto of the permanent member. Is there need for any more proof that the worlds’ decisions are taken by only a few, the most influential states? UN’s missions and Security Council’s decisions take time and effort to be adopted and to take place because it is so easy for states to sabotage them and orient them according to their interests.

**Some Conclusions**

All throughout this paper and especially in the case-study we were able to prove, hopefully, that states continue to be the major actors of the international system to such an extent that any other actors (international organizations, transnational organizations etc) are highly dependent on them. The UN and the EU eventually do what their member states tell them to do. The most powerful states make the rules (see American intervention in Kosovo in 1999) and eventually the rest of the world conforms to them (UN eventually motivated USA’s intervention in the name of humanitarian purposes). At the same time, the break up of Kosovo with Serbia, as we could see, can be interpreted in two different ways and both of them support realism as explanatory theory. All the communities, regions, territories and separatist movements inside a state that fight against the legitimacy of the government and its policies ultimately want the same thing: independence

\textsuperscript{30} All the countries whose positions we have analyzed in the case-study are UN members.

\textsuperscript{31} Such as the USA in the Kosovo War.

and sovereignty. Simply put, they fight for exactly the same thing they challenge in the state that encloses them. The simplest and most viable solution to a state’s serious internal problems is the creation of another state. What proof can be more valuable for the relevance of neorealist theories today? In a world that highly promotes globalism and interdependence, states are being built under our own eyes. The struggle remains one for power, the power that gives independence, security and legitimacy. The state becomes, in these conditions, a purpose in itself. The positions adopted by the international actors regarding the independence of Kosovo can be explained by the neo-realism in a viable and non-contradictory way. This supports our hypothesis that realist theories continue to offer solid grounds for explaining and understanding the international system today. Thus, they are accurate, updated and not at all obsolete.
Bibliography:


Webliography:

4. CNN News website - [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)