

Conflict, Statehood and Sovereignty in World Politics: The European Union and Unrecognised States

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Introduction

How does the international community approach unrecognised states and the conflicts they relate to? What limitations do these approaches pose to conflict management and how can they be overcome? This paper elaborates on my conceptual framework for exploring those questions, which are very important but somehow neglected in the academic and policy debate. By 'approaches' I refer to policies and strategies of the international community and especially international organisations, such as the UN, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and, for this paper in particular, the EU, which represent my case studies, with a particular focus on the formulation of the approach. I use conflict 'management' because of its inclusiveness as a term and because it allows capturing

a wide range of strategies of international organisations towards conflict, such a conflict prevention or resolution or crisis management (see also Whitman and Wolff 2012). By 'unrecognised states', I refer to self-declared independent states that display a certain degree of what are conventionally understood as statehood characteristics (a certain population, a territory and a government) but they are not recognised by a significant part of the international community. Though I use the term 'unrecognised', I also refer to cases where recognition, formal or informal, is quite extensive yet not full. This definition does not include examples of political entities that are part of recognised state structures (e.g. federation), even if secession is or has been their objective (e.g. Catalonia, Iraqi Kurdistan). The reason I am favouring 'unrecognised' over the other often used term of 'contested' states is because of the promise of greater analytical clarity, since the latter term has been used to discuss not only contestation from outside the unrecognised state (e.g. Geldenhuys 2009, Ker-Lindsay 2012) but also from within (e.g. Papadimitriou and Petrov 2007), which is not a concern of this study.

Drawing on discussions on sovereignty and statehood, my conceptual framework aims to inform two stages of research and analysis of my research programme in the following years: first, I will explore what conceptualisations of state sovereignty are (re)produced within international organisations. In more specific, discourse analysis is advanced as a method that facilitates the exploration of three variations of the concept of state sovereignty, which are expected to dominate perceptions of what is considered a state, or an unrecognised state: a) 'external sovereignty' (i.e. that a state enjoys international recognition), b) 'internal sovereignty' (i.e. effective state structures and authority) and also c) 'Westphalian' sovereignty (i.e. independence from outsiders, see also Krasner 2001). The next stage of analysis involves tracing the process via which those ideas affect the approach of international organisations towards unrecognised states and their related conflicts.

The conceptual framework for exploring the neglected relationship between conflict and unrecognised statehood that this paper elaborates on is of paramount

importance: many of today's conflicts relate to unrecognised states in and around Europe (Cyprus, Kosovo, the Arab-Israeli conflict), especially in the post-Soviet space (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh), but also in Africa (Somaliland, Western Sahara) and, finally, Taiwan. The Ukraine crisis, a very important security development in recent times, witnessed the 'birth' of Donetsk and Luhansk, which, according to my definition, are the 'youngest' unrecognised states in the world today. An independent Kurdistan could be the next unrecognised state to emerge with major implications for international security. All these show the continuous significance of unrecognised statehood for international (in)stability and relations between major global actors, such as the EU, UN, Russia and countries of the Middle East. As such, investigating this understudied issue is important for understanding the limitations that unrecognised statehood poses to conflict management and suggest ways in which those limitations can be addressed.

Conflict and (Unrecognised) Statehood: The Missing Link

The end of the Cold War brought a series of disputes to the forefront of international and particularly European politics, and as new states started to appear, also as a result of the break up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, so did unrecognised states. As a result and especially in the European periphery, disputes emerged or were reignited because of the secessionist efforts of unrecognised states, especially in the post-Soviet space, including Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria but also Kosovo. Those cases came to join other, earlier conflicts that relate to unrecognised states, such as Palestine in the Middle-East and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) but also, further away, Western Sahara, Somaliland and Taiwan. A number of international organisations have sought to play a positive role in the management of those conflicts. The EU in particular, has used a range of policy frameworks and instruments –such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) or Enlargement- to try promoting regional stability and cooperation and help the resolution of the many disputes in its neighbourhood. Indeed, the latest Treaty of Lisbon (2009) reiterated

and strengthened earlier commitments that the EU shall 'preserve peace, prevent conflict and strengthen international security' (article 2.c).

These developments have had an important impact on conflict studies, where a great number of works have looked at how conflicts can be mediated, resolved or managed¹. With reference to European studies in particular, many scholars have investigated EU and conflicts, including secessionist disputes that relate to unrecognised states, in its near, or not so near, abroad. For example, Coppieters et al. (2004) have looked at how various forms of integration with the EU have impacted this type of conflicts and a series of secessionist disputes at the EU's near abroad are also what Tocci has focused on (2008). Finally Hughes (2010) has offered an edition of works on the Balkans, post-soviet space but also the Arab-Israeli conflict and Africa, while the edition by Wolff and Whitman (2012) added more case studies that are often neglected within EU literature (e.g. Afghanistan) and offered a range of comparative comments.

But, despite the many works on conflict, the issue of unrecognised statehood remains largely under-researched. Even when dealing with secessionist conflicts, the works mentioned above do not elaborate on the specificities of unrecognised states that were born out of secession and what they mean for approaches to conflict and international security. This is not very surprising, given that works on unrecognised states in more general remain limited. Only a small number of works have talked about diplomatic aspects of some unrecognised states (Papadimitriou and Petrov 2012 with reference to Kosovo)² or the impact of the EU on their domestic politics (Kyris 2015 with reference to the TRNC and Bouris and Kyris 2014). The wider international relations debate has also focused a lot on domestic aspects of those 'peculiar' entities of international relations: some have elaborated on what constitutes an unrecognised state (e.g. Geldenhuys 2009, Caspersen 2012), while others have looked at their political systems (e.g. Berg and Mölder 2012, Kolstø and

¹ See for example Miall et al. (2011) or Wallensteen (2002)

² Not too dissimilarly but in a different context, Caplan (2007) has studied the process through which the EU recognised the states which were born out of the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Blakkisrud 2012), also with regard to the resolution of the related conflict (King 2001) or democratisation (e.g. Caspersen 2011, Voller 2013). Those few studies on the relationship between unrecognised states and other international actors have mostly focused on how the international community has reacted to the self-declaration of those entities (e.g. Pegg 1998, Lynch 2004, Musson 2008, Fabry 2009, Coggins 2011), the way in which unrecognised states seek international recognition (e.g. Bahcheli et al 2004) or how 'parent' states (i.e. the officially recognised states from which a unrecognised state might have succeeded) try to prevent their recognition (Ker-Lindsay 2012). In 2011, Caspersen and Stansfield edited a collection of, sometimes case-driven, essays on unrecognised states, which is a good starting point for a more in-depth discussion of the matter- indeed, the editors underline a range of issues that are raised in the book but merit further investigation, some of which are at the microscope of this study (see, for example, the discussion of 'external patrons' later). In this context, works on unrecognised states remain limited, often case-driven, especially as far as approaches of the international community are concerned - this is even more so the case in EU studies. Many reasons might lie behind this gap in the literature, including the fact that international organisations, like the EU, have not themselves developed specific policies about unrecognised states or the domination of conflict resolution themes and approaches in both policy and scholarly debate. But, even more interestingly, a reason for this relative neglect of the topic of unrecognised states might be the domination of conventional statehood as a concept of European and international relations that is not often problematised.

Yet, unrecognised states are at the very heart of many international conflicts, and especially those closer to the EU. Beyond Taiwan, Somaliland and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in Western Sahara, most unrecognised states lie in what the EU considers its wider neighbourhood. Following the Oslo Accords (1993, 1995), the EU has engaged with state-building in Palestine, in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, one of the greatest disputes in the European neighbourhood. The EU embarked on state-building also in the case of Kosovo, when, in 1999

undertook responsibility for Pillar IV of the United Nations Interim Administration (UNMIK), focusing on reconstruction and economic development. When Kosovo declared independence in 2008, EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) was established in order to help locals with application of the rule of law (Council of the EU, 2008) and the unrecognised state is now regarded a potential candidate for EU accession. At the same time, the EU accession of Cyprus in 2004 had already brought an unrecognised state, that of the TRNC, closer to the EU than ever before. Since then, the EU has developed a range of activities that aim at the development of northern Cyprus and the preparation of Turkish Cypriots for application of EU law, when reunification with the Greek Cypriots will extend *acquis communautaire* also in the northern territories of the island, which are considered to be part of the EU but currently under the control of the TRNC and beyond the effective control of the official, Greek Cypriot-led government of the country. Yet, the aftermath of the biggest enlargement in 2004 redefined the borders of the EU and gave birth to the ENP, which brought a series of post-soviet conflicts and their unrecognised states to the forefront of EU affairs: south Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh in the Caucasus and Transnistria in Moldova. Last but not least, the 'youngest' unrecognised states of Luhansk and Donetsk emerged out of the Ukraine crisis, which began in 2013 and which the EU has found itself greatly involved in.

In this sense, not only unrecognised statehood has been at the centre of major conflicts that the international community and the EU in particular have been greatly involved in but developments such as the Ukraine crisis show that unrecognised states continue emerging and pose serious challenges to regional stability and security. They, therefore, constitute a continuously important topic for international politics that requires more research, since the relation between conflict and unrecognised statehood has not been at the centre of scholarly attention. This paper aims to introduce a conceptual framework for addressing this lack of analyses of international engagement with unrecognised states, beyond diplomatic matters like recognition, and in relation to conflict management and for answering

Q. How does the international community approach unrecognised states and what does that mean for conflict management?

The way the international community engages with unrecognised states (rather than the impact of this engagement) as an interesting but unexplored research avenue became obvious through my study of the impact of the EU on the domestic affairs of unrecognised states (Kyris 2015). Of course, concentrating on a very specific issue such as unrecognised statehood comes with certain limitations, such as that I cannot account for other aspects of these conflicts. However, it is this focus on the interplay between unrecognised statehood and approaches of the international community to conflict that promises to provide nuance and missing findings. This new perspective is crucial if we want to understand approaches towards conflict and the limitations (or opportunities) that unrecognised statehood poses to the promotion of security and stability in world politics today and in the future, as well as overcoming those limitations.

A Framework of Analysis

In order to answer my main research question and develop hypotheses, I plan to focus on how approaches of international organisations, as the dependent variable, are shaped by ideas of state sovereignty, as the independent variable (see also Figure 1). I focus on state sovereignty because, as the most fundamental concept when students and practitioners of world politics think of statehood, I expect it to be the most important factor conditioning the way in which the international community approaches unrecognised states. As Geldenhuys (2009, 14) puts it in his study of unrecognised states, 'it is unthinkable to discuss statehood without regard to the notion of sovereignty'. In order to explore how the international community approaches unrecognised states and their conflicts, I plan a comparison of three international organisations: the UN, OSCE and the EU. Understanding state sovereignty as something socially defined, those organisations can be studied not only because of their important role in conflict management but also as spaces within which ideas like sovereignty are articulated via socialisation. Differences in

their geographical and thematic coverage along with other intervening variables should be accounted for in order to explore how different combinations of independent and intervening variables produce differences in the dependent variable, i.e. international approaches to unrecognised states/ their conflict (see also Figure 1). In the following paragraphs, I elaborate on this research design.

Sovereignty

The idea of sovereignty took many different forms until the sixteenth century³. But since the Treaty of Westphalia, which is schematically seen as the establishment of the modern international state system, the meaning of this idea has remained more or less the same: *state sovereignty*⁴ based on a functioning state with government, which is recognised as such and independent in its authority over a territory and a population. Yet, state sovereignty has been conceptualised to have different aspects. Jackson (2007) refers to sovereignty as ‘supremacy’ in internal affairs and ‘independence’ in external affairs, two aspects of sovereignty often seen as sides of the same coin. Similarly, Eaton (2006) writes about sovereignty based on ‘the supreme power over a body politic’ but also ‘freedom from external control’. In this regard, there is a clear *internal* aspect to sovereignty, which is about de facto effective control of the government of the state over its territory and people and, generally, effective economic and political systems and institutions (Clapham 1998, Krasner 2004).

At the same time, sovereignty is also about autonomy from significant interference from outsiders. Krasner has often called this ‘Westphalian’ sovereignty (see for example 2004) and I will adopt this term, given the centrality of the notion of non-interference within the Treaty of Westphalia and the way it is remembered. Non-interference implies that there is a recognition of sovereign statehood but it is analytically important to draw a distinction between, on the one hand, freedom from outsiders’ control (Westphalian sovereignty) and, on the other hand, international

³ See for example Jackson (2007) for a detailed discussion

⁴ From now on, sovereignty is used to discuss *state* sovereignty in specific.

recognition, what I call here *external* sovereignty, which is the single condition that actually makes can help us distinguish states between recognised and unrecognised. My choice to speak of external sovereignty as the lack of international recognition is unlike a few studies that tend to speak of the same term as absence of outsiders' interference (what I schematically call 'Westphalian' sovereignty) and which could create analytical confusion here. At the same time, the ability of a state to establish relations with outsiders is also considered a criterion of internal sovereignty and this links internal sovereignty to external sovereignty: while we can talk about the *potential* to enter into relations with others, the lack of external sovereignty (i.e. recognition from outsiders) might not allow the fulfilment of this potential (Inayatullah 1996).

To summarise, this analytical framework largely draws upon three variations in the conceptualisation of sovereignty:

- a) *Internal* sovereignty, which refers to effective government structures, including territorial control
- b) *External* sovereignty, which refers to recognition as a state from outsiders and
- c) *Westphalian* sovereignty, which refers to the independence from interference of outsiders.

The centrality of sovereignty within our thinking about statehood and world politics in more general informs my assumption that those are the ideas that would dominate the way international organisations, and the EU in particular, approach unrecognised states. As I will explain later, my focus on international organisations is also because I approach sovereignty as an idea that is socially defined, not least within spaces like international organisations. Indeed, my previous engagement with the topic (Bouris and Kyris 2014, Kyris 2015) has allowed me to see sovereignty as predominantly socially constructed, something that also remains relatively

unexplored⁵. While ideas on state sovereignty have been proven rather resilient within the modernity of world politics, socialisation is crucial for their (re)production—take for example the idea of external sovereignty, which relates to the recognition of a state by others in world politics, a *social* process by default. Besides, changes in the ways sovereignty has been applied in world politics are another sign of the social construction of sovereignty. Over the years, there has been a lot of variation on who claims sovereignty or whom we think is entitled to it. Is it monarchs, parliament, people? While, initially, colonised people were not considered ‘worthy’ of sovereignty, this changed later through de-colonisation, and with the increasing role of the UN as a ‘gate keeper’ of sovereignty. What has also changed with time is how sovereignty has been used to guide and justify action, from war through to humanitarian intervention, and to regulate relations between states (see for example Sinoda 2000). This underlines the importance of the historical and social context and makes a crucial link between socially constructed ideas of sovereignty and action in world politics. In this regard, I will focus on international organisations in order to explore if and how they offer a socialising space within which structures, like institutions, norms or ideas such as sovereignty are (re)produced, and how, in turn, they impact upon agents, their identities, interests and action. Discussing research methods, George and Bennet (2005) actually use the example of sovereignty to explain how certain social structures are sufficiently recursive and long-lived that recognisable behavioural patterns can be theorised upon for meaningful periods of time.

In the broader international relations debate, Adler (1997), Checkel (1998) or Wendt (1992, 1999), have looked at how ideas, norms, identities, interests and actions are socially constructed. This broad ontological view of a socially constructed reality is what unites a group of, in fact, rather diverse approaches in terms of epistemology,

⁵ Notable exception here is the volume edited by Biersteker and Weber (1996), which, however, focuses more on how state sovereignty is used to build a state (via identity formation for example) rather than how it mediates policies of external actors towards unrecognised states. Naturally due to its publication date the volume cannot account for more recent developments in the theoretical debate either nor the issue of unrecognised states recently in more empirical terms.

some of which are quite close to the positivist ways of rational international relations theory. At the same time, the prioritisation of the social context as subject of analysis implies a focus on collectivity, which is an important departure from rational theories that concentrate on human individuality. In this context, the preoccupation of social constructivists with socialisation and inter-subjectivity means that they subscribe to a 'logic of appropriateness', which pushes actors to follow rules that they associate with identities, rather than a 'logic of consequentialism', which is mostly advocated by rational approaches. With reference to the EU in particular, scholars have discovered a certain fit between social constructivism as a conceptual template and the EU as a case study. The appearance of the significant edition 'the Social Construction of Europe' by Christiansen, Jørgensen and Wiener on a European Public Policy special issue in 1999 and as a book in 2001 is often considered (Eilstrup-Sangiovani 2006, 397; Risse 2009, 144) as the moment that social constructivism 'hit' EU studies (but see also Jørgensen 1997). There, Christiansen, Jørgensen and Wiener (2001) talked about the potential that social constructivism has to debate the transformative nature of the EU as a socio-political space. Elsewhere, others have looked at the constitutive effect of institutions as both 'promoters' and 'sites' of socialisation (Checkel 2005). Attempting a useful categorisation, Risse (2009, 151) also argues that social constructivist lenses can help us look at how the EU is constructed through discourse and how actors understand European integration. Indeed, Jørgensen and Wiener (2001, 15) find that works on discourse have a great potential for studies on European integration because of the specific institutional and social context for elites social communication at the EU level. It is this constructivist theme of discourse that becomes useful in exploring how the concept of state sovereignty defines approaches of international organisations, including the EU, towards unrecognised states and related conflicts.

In this regard, I will now explore how we can discuss unrecognised states by means of ideas on sovereignty, also drawing on some of the literature on these issues and examples from the unrecognised states that exist today. I will do so in order to develop my research hypotheses about the way international organisations

approach those entities of the international system and their conflict. Therefore, like many before (see earlier), this work is also informed by the concept of sovereignty (see below), but my aim here is not to test if unrecognised states are sovereign enough but, rather, to see how international organisations view unrecognised states along sovereignty lines and what does this mean for the way they approach related conflicts. In this regard, the discussion of internal, external and Westphalian sovereignty that follows is not an effort to assess whether unrecognised states are sovereign enough but, rather, whether they are *approached* as such. Below, I will talk about how unrecognised states display ineffective governments or how they are not recognised internationally. I do not make these empirical observations in order to offer an authoritative, 'positivist' answer on the sovereignty of unrecognised states but, rather, to elaborate on why and how exactly these realities inform the way the international community, and international organisations in specific, approach unrecognised states.

Beginning with external sovereignty, its lack is seen as the *sine qua non* characteristic of unrecognised states. Geldenhuys (2009) reflects on unrecognised states as cases that lack of *de jure* recognition, despite what is often effective control of the (unrecognised) government over their declared territory. Yet, especially when looking at unrecognised states from a more political rather than legal viewpoint, it is important to underline that lack of international recognition can take a variety of forms, beyond *de jure* recognition. There are many ways of engagement or acknowledgement (and, equally, lack of) by the international community that fall short of actual legal recognition and that might strengthen (or weaken) the status of the unrecognised state as a separate unit in world politics. Ker-Lindsay (2012, 6) emphasises membership of organisations or participation in international events and, similarly, Berg and Toomla (2009) draw on the concept of external sovereignty and talk about recognition via membership of international organisations but also foreign representations abroad, foreign trade, air and postal communication and telecommunications. There are many examples of unrecognised states that enjoy quite considerable acknowledgement in world politics, despite

being de jure unrecognised: Palestine is a UN observer, Kosovo is member of the World Bank, Taiwan enjoys very extensive trade or diplomatic links with the rest of the world, while all three now take part in the Olympic Games.

In this regard, and in order to account for the degree of international recognition in existing unrecognised states, not only formal diplomatic recognition but other types of acknowledgement mentioned above should be considered, such as participation in international fora, foreign representation, practically free interaction with outsiders, including trade, travel and communication. Schematically, I begin by suggesting that any state that enjoys official recognition by more than two thirds of UN member states is regarded to have high external sovereignty; any case with lower than one third of recognition has low and the rest have medium. My focus on UN membership is due to the paramount importance that acceptance to the UN, the 'hand maiden' of state creation (Caplan 2006, 1), plays in the process of acquiring recognised statehood. Based on this, it seems that Palestine is the only existing unrecognised state that displays high external sovereignty. As a second step, however, it is important to also underline the quality rather than just quantity of recognition. Because of that, I also consider Kosovo as having a high degree of external sovereignty, because of its participation in international events or fora and because, especially as far as EU is concerned, it is recognised by 23 out of 28 of its member states and it is also regarded as a potential candidate for EU accession, despite enjoying formal recognition by less than two thirds of UN member states. Similarly, given its effectively strong connection to the outside world, Taiwan should also be considered to display medium external sovereignty, despite its low formal recognition that is below a third of UN members. The rest of the unrecognised states are considered to have low external sovereignty because of their extensive lack of both formal recognition and international links, despite some connections with certain actors or bodies (e.g. TRNC is an observer in the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation). In many cases, this might mean that none or only one state recognises the unrecognised state. For example, Somaliland, Nagorno Karabakh, Transnistria, Luhansk and Donetsk are not recognised by any state (though mutual

recognition between some unrecognised states of the post-Soviet space is often) while TRNC is recognised only by Turkey (see also later discussion of 'external patrons').

The variation in the degree of international recognition already underlines that sovereignty 'should not be seen as absolute' (Caplan 2006, 12) but more as a continuum, where unrecognised states might be regarded as enjoying varied degrees of internal, external or Westphalian sovereignty. At the same time, it is important to underline here that different degrees of what is perceived as sovereignty might co-exist. For example, the very low degree of external sovereignty of the TRNC also comes with compromised Westphalian sovereignty, because of the role of Turkey in the affairs of the unrecognised state (see also below). Elsewhere, while Palestine can be considered to have a low degree of internal sovereignty (see below) this does not mean that it enjoys full external or Westphalian sovereignty. For example, a sizeable proportion of states and international actors continue to not recognise the Palestinian state, despite the fact that, in comparison, external sovereignty is higher than internal.

While lack of external sovereignty is what essentially defines unrecognised states, internal sovereignty is by no means irrelevant: the issue of limited internal sovereignty is often associated with so-called 'weak', 'fragile', 'quasi', 'collapsed' or 'failed' states, particularly in Africa (e.g. Migdal, 1988, Jackson 1993), which lack effective state structures. Those types of states are seen as the 'mirror image' (Ker-Lindsay 2012, 20) of unrecognised states (in the sense that the latter predominantly lack international recognition while the former are fully recognised but they do not have effective governmental control) but the picture is slightly more complex. It is often the case that the relatively young character of many of the existing unrecognised states (out of thirteen, only Taiwan and SADR existed before 1983), combined with the lack of international integration, comes with rather underdeveloped and/or ineffective state apparatuses. For example, while enjoying a high degree of what is perceived as external or Westphalian sovereignty, the degree

of Palestine's internal sovereignty can be considered rather low, since state structures, like police or the judiciary, are underdeveloped and there is preliminary indication that the extensive state-building nature of international and EU approaches has been informed by the notion of internal sovereignty (see also Bouris and Kyris 2014)- something similar can also be said about the reasons behind statebuilding in Kosovo. On the opposite end, though, unrecognised states like the TRNC can be seen as rather consolidated, with relatively effective institutions and therefore their internal sovereignty can be seen as high.

But internal sovereignty also relates to the ability of a state to control its territories (Howland, D. and White 2009) and this is often compromised in conflicts that relate to unrecognised states: frequently as a result of the territorial dispute with 'parent' states, the unrecognised state does not enjoy full and effective control over the territory it claims. The TRNC has overall good control of its territories and to a greater or lesser extent so do South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno Karabakh, Kosovo, Somaliland and Taiwan. But the same cannot be said for Palestine, which does not enjoy authority over a part of its declared territories that are controlled by Israel, Donetsk and Luhansk, where the conflict is on-going and controlled territories are not so clear or SADR, which controls only a small part of the Western Sahara area that it claims. It is, therefore, clear that most existing unrecognised states can be considered as lacking internal sovereignty as well, in varied degrees, because of differences in the extent of development and effectiveness of state structures and territorial control. For their internal sovereignty to be assessed, we should look at territorial control, the effectiveness of economic and political systems and institutions.

Lastly, what is understood as Westphalian sovereignty is often compromised in unrecognised states. While independence from externals is often considered to have been weakened even in 'normal' types of states- Krasner (2001, 245), for instance, argues that the EU has restricted the Westphalian sovereignty of its member states-, this paper suggests that Westphalian sovereignty is subject to

compromise by a rather specific actor common to many unrecognised states, what I call here an 'external patron'. This is an actor, like a state or an international organisation, which 'patronises' the unrecognised state, and especially its governance, in many different ways and degrees, including financial, economic, political or military assistance. This conceptualisation is based on previous works that mostly focused on 'patron' or 'creator' states (Kolstør's 2006, Geldenhuys' 2009), with only Anderson (2011) acknowledging the possibility of other types of international actors, like NATO, acting as 'protectors'. While important in introducing this element of unrecognised statehood, the above works did not aim to offer an in-depth account of those patrons and, indeed, Stansfield and Harvey (2011, 20) see this as one of the characteristics of unrecognised states that call for a more systematic theorisation. This issue of patronage has also been implicitly or more explicitly discussed before in the context of sovereignty when Sørensen (1999, 601) reflected on post-colonial states and how their lack of substantial sovereignty meant they had to rely on the international community to perform state tasks, such as protection from intervention. Besides Turkey, which plays an important role in the unrecognised state of the TRNC, Russia has used military, financial, economic or political means to assist all unrecognised states in the post-Soviet space and for that reason can be seen as an external patron for those entities. Similarly, Algeria can also be seen as an external patron of the SADR, while Kolstør (2006) argues for a similar understanding of the US role vis a vis Taiwan. Time and again, unrecognised states might also seek further integration, even annexation, with this third state too: for example, Turkey and the TRNC, or Russia and Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Not too dissimilarly, in 2014, Crimea seceded from Ukraine and existed as an unrecognised state for a few hours before joining Russia. But NATO or the EU itself can also be seen as 'patronising' statehood in certain cases, such as for example in Kosovo or Palestine (see also below), where they have played an important role in helping state-building. This dependency on an external patron becomes especially important in understanding regional dynamics, such as those of the post-Soviet space.

In this sense, those ideas on sovereignty have shaped the way we think of states, be it recognised or unrecognised. This is why the literature has mostly conceptualised unrecognised states based on how much they (do not) fit understandings of conventional state sovereignty (for example Pegg 1998, Fabry 2009, Geldenhuys 2009, Caspersen and Stansfield 2011, Caspersen 2012) rather than a more positive assessment- see, for example, Krasner's work on 'problematic sovereignty' (2001). On EU matters specifically, drawing on Kyris (2013, 2015) and others, Bouris and Kyris (2014) conceptualised the impact of the EU on the domestic scene of unrecognised states by means of this academic discussion on sovereignty. As for the practise of world politics, Sørensen (1999) rightly underlines that the increasing number of states since the mid-20th century is indicative of the popularity of sovereignty but it is important, I argue, to also look at those who have declared statehood but they remain unrecognised. This is because those entities and their efforts to be recognised as sovereign also reconfirm the centrality of state sovereignty as an idea of world politics. After all, it is their decision to embrace ideas of sovereignty (through declaration of state independence) that is the first stage in becoming an unrecognised state. Having said that, unrecognised states also destabilise the paradigm of state sovereignty and they pose a direct challenge to conventional understandings of world politics. Take for example Jackson's (2011, x) argument that there is no inhabited territory that does not belong to a state in the world today. At a first glance and from a legal point of view, this might seem like truth but if we talk about what is perceived as substantial sovereignty in practise then there are many officially recognised states which do not enjoy sovereignty over areas that an unrecognised state might claim, and indeed practically exercise, sovereignty. A good example here is Cyprus, where part of its territories is beyond the control of the official government and under the control of the unrecognised TRNC, a reality acknowledged by the EU (e.g. Council of the EU, 2006). In this sense, unrecognised states pose a challenge to the argument about a rather smooth organisation of world politics today based on state sovereignty. This combination of, on the one hand, the centrality of state sovereignty as an idea of world politics in the modern age and, on the other hand, the antithetical ways in which it interplays

with conflict, makes all the more important to focus on sovereignty and how it shapes the way unrecognised statehood is approached in the practise of world politics.

As a final stage in the process of developing hypotheses, I will now elaborate on the variables that I expect to intervene between those ideas of sovereignty (independent variable) and the way they shape the approaches of international organisations (dependent variable, see also Figure 1). First of all, we could talk about the extent to which the organisations themselves or their members recognise the unrecognised state and how this might mediate their approaches to related conflicts. For example, at the moment, most unrecognised states lack in recognition by all member states of the EU. There are two notable exemptions: Kosovo, which is recognised by 23 out of 28 member states and Palestine, which is recognised by 8. Similarly, Kosovo and Palestine enjoy quite a lot of recognition from UN members. Secondly, we should account for the relation between international organisations and the 'parent' state, which varies significantly. For example, the unrecognised TRNC has seceded from the Republic of Cyprus, which is now a EU member state. In Kosovo, the EU maintains equally strong relations to Serbia, which is also a candidate for accession. Israel (though not really a 'parent' state), Armenia, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine are also important EU partners in the context of the ENP. This is expected to condition significantly the way the EU sees unrecognised states, including the issue of their recognition. The relations between the UN, OSCE, the EU and the 'external patron' are also expected to mediate their approach. All these also relate to and depend upon the interests of individual members of those organisations, especially those that are more involved in specific conflicts than others- e.g. the role of the US in many of these conflicts, Russia in the post-Soviet space, UK in Cyprus or other conflicts. Last and related comes the kind of policy framework within which international organisations operate, such as ENP, Common Security and Defence Policy or Enlargement in the case of the EU as well as the policy aims and instruments, all of which are also expected to mediate the

process by which ideas on sovereignty lead to certain approaches towards unrecognised states and their related conflict.

In this regard and drawing on my review of state sovereignty in modern thinking and practice of world politics, I hypothesise that ideas of internal, external and Westphalian sovereignty are those that are dominant within the UN, OSCE and the EU. These assumptions also draw on preliminary or previous research, and particularly my single-case study of the TRNC (Kyriss 2015) and Kyriss and Bouris (2014) both of which, although focused on the *impact* of EU engagement on the domestic scene of unrecognised states, they also offer some first indications on how sovereignty ideas might shape international and EU's approaches too. We could, therefore, expect that perceived low external sovereignty will lead to a low-intensity engagement. Looking at intervening variables, we can further assume that the less members of the international organisation recognise the self-declared state, the more difficult engagement will be, because it might be seen as entailing the risk of 'recognition by implication' (Kyriss 2015, 47). Engagement might also be compromised if there are specific member states that are directly or indirectly involved in the particular conflict related to the unrecognised state- for example, the government representing the EU member state of Cyprus is the 'parent' state vis a vis the unrecognised TRNC. At the same time, we can also hypothesise that perceived lack of external sovereignty will lead to approaches that engage more with non-state actors, like civil society or technocrats, rather than authorities of the unrecognised state, because this is a less controversial and diplomatically significant approach (Kyriss 2013). Moving on with internal sovereignty, it is expected that this will add a 'state-building' flavour to international approaches, also in the context of conflict management (see also Bouris and Kyriss 2014). However, again, the degree to which the international organisation and its member states endorse the possibility of a fully recognised state is anticipated to mediate this process. For example, the two big state-building projects of the EU, namely Kosovo and Palestine, have to do cases where there is a rather clear recognition that the emergence of a state is part of the resolution of the conflict. In other cases, such as in Cyprus where there

resolution envisaged is one of a single federation, the EU has been rather reluctant to work with institutions of the unrecognised TRNC. On the other hand, incomplete territorial control is expected to also compromise international approaches because the 'parent state' (which might control some of the territories) will not allow the EU to fulfil its aim- see for example Israel in the context of the conflict with Palestine. While, at a first glance, this has to do with the fulfilment of objectives, it is also assumed that could impact the formulation of approaches and make them a bit less ambitious. Finally, looking at Westphalian sovereignty, we could expect that international approaches will be compromised because of the influence of the 'external patron' over the unrecognised state. This could be because the external patron might try stopping international organisations from developing a role in the conflict or because the patron, which unlike international organisations, fully recognises the unrecognised state, becomes an 'easier' interlocutor in comparison. Besides, we should also expect international approaches to try balancing the promotion of conflict resolution with the aims of the UN, OSCE or the EU in the context of their relation to the patron actor, which might not necessarily be the same or complementary.

To summarise, then: in order to answer the question on how does the international community, and especially international organisations involved with conflict management, approach unrecognised states and their related conflict, I will focus on the ideational context affecting these approaches and particularly on ideas of sovereignty, as the independent variable, and how they shape approaches of international organisations, as the dependent variable. In other words, I will explore how international organisations' ideas that a state is a state when it is recognised as such (external sovereignty), when it has effective government (internal sovereignty) and when it is independent (Westphalian sovereignty) impact approaches towards conflicts that relate to unrecognised states. In tracing this process, I will account for a series of intervening variables discussed above. There are, therefore, four hypotheses that will allow me to explore my overarching question:

Hyp1. Ideas of internal, external and Westphalian state sovereignty are reproduced via socialisation within international organisations.

Hyp2a. Ideas on external sovereignty lead to 'state avoidance'. This compromises conflict management efforts but offers opportunities for engagement with non-state actors. This type of engagement might be helpful for the long-term solution of the dispute but in the short-term strengthens secessionist efforts and is counterproductive to conflict management.

Hyp2b. Ideas on internal sovereignty lead to low intensity engagement, especially in the territories outside the control of the unrecognised state, and, where the international community regards claims to statehood as legitimate, to 'state building' practises, which ultimately could help the implementation of an agreement.

Hyp2c. Ideas on Westphalian sovereignty lead to a low intensity engagement and approaches that try to limit the influence of an 'external patron'. Where international organisations can themselves be considered as the 'external patron', ideas on Westphalian sovereignty inform approaches that allow 'ownership' of processes by the locals.

Testing these hypotheses in the case studies, political discourse analysis becomes very helpful (see, for example, Van Dijk 2011). For the EU, I will concentrate on discourse from the European Commission, since the focus here is on *formulation* (rather than, for example, implementation) of an approach. At the same time, drawing on discourse from the European Council aims to shed light on the overall strategic direction towards unrecognised states and conflict. More specifically, I will look into various European Commission documents, such as white papers and proposals for regulations, as well as European Council summit conclusions and I will also conduct interviews with senior officials from the European Commission (directors generals and deputies, directors, senior advisors and heads of cabinets) in

order to explore in more depth how they, also inter-subjectively, understand state sovereignty. Research should also be sensitive on the distinction between 'front' and 'back' stage activities at the EU level and the different functions discourse might have (e.g. representation, legitimisation, see also Chilton and Schaffner 2011). I will not undertake discourse analysis in a critical manner (for more on critical discourse analysis see for example Fairclough 2013), since the focus here is not to discuss how discourse is used as a power tool but, rather, how it informs certain choices of international organisations and the EU. However, at a later stage of research, the findings on opportunities and limitations that discourse poses to EU policy can allow the exploration of alternative strategies for the promotion of stability and security in relation to the conflicts studied.

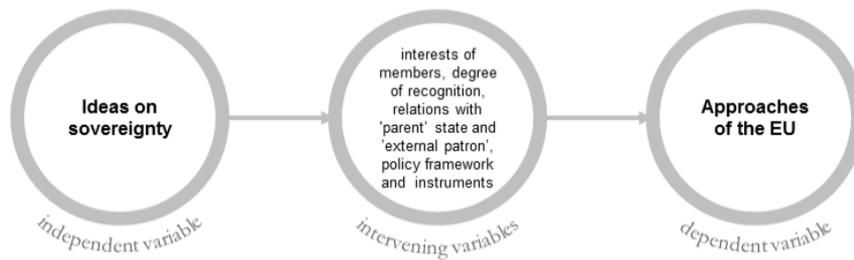
Conclusion

In this paper I introduced my conceptual framework for exploring approaches of international organisations, and the EU in particular, towards unrecognised states and what they mean for the management of their related conflicts. I have explained that in order to explore specificities of international approaches towards these entities of world politics, I will be focusing on what are conceptualised as their exceptional characteristics *vis a vis* conventional states. Taking into account a series of intervening variables, like the EU's or the member states' diplomatic position towards the recognition of the unrecognised state, I advanced a series of hypotheses on how ideas on sovereignty are reflected in international approaches towards unrecognised states and what they mean for the related conflict.

In this regard, this paper and outlined research programme aims to make a contribution to the literature by bridging the two separate themes of conflict and unrecognised statehood. By doing so, it hopes to make an important contribution to the relatively small field of inquiry on conflicts of unrecognised states, which mostly consists of case-driven works and works that concentrate on domestic or diplomatic affairs of those entities. This is a topic of high academic but also policy relevance. Indeed, the constantly increasing conflict management efforts of the EU and the rest

of international community has found its way through an archipelago of unrecognised states, in Cyprus, Palestine but also other areas of Africa and many in the post-Soviet space. The self-declarations of Luhansk and Donetsk republics during the recent Ukraine crisis only go to show the continued importance of unrecognised statehood and the need to try focus on those peculiar entities and their relevance to European and international politics.

Figure 1. Research Design



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