

# TUTELARY DEMOCRACY IN UNRECOGNIZED STATES

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*Abstract: This paper proposes a theoretical framework for explaining the democratization dynamics in unrecognized states. It is argued that lack of recognition and pressure from the parent state oblige de facto states to depend on a patron state. In return for economic and military assistance, patron states expect to control the decision-making process in de facto states. It is stated that this limits these entities' democratization potential to a maximum of being a tutelary democracy.*

*Keywords: De Facto/Unrecognized States, Democracy with Adjectives, Democratization, Patron States, Tutelary Democracy*

## TANINMAMIŞ DEVLETLERDE VESAYET REJİMİ

*Özet: Bu makalenin amacı tanınmamış devletlerdeki demokratikleşme sürecindeki dinamikleri açıklayabilmek için bir teorik çerçeve sunmaktır. Tanınmamışlık ve bunun beraberinde daha önce parçası olunan devletten gelen baskılar neticesinde, tanınmamış devletler bir koruyucu devlete ihtiyaç duyarlar. Fakat sağlanan mali ve askeri yardım karşılığında koruyucu devletler tanınmamış devletlerdeki karar verme mekanizmalarını kontrol ederler. Bu tanınmamış devletlerin demokratikleşme potansiyelini kısıtlar ve bu devletlerde bir vesayet rejiminin oluşmasına yol açar.*

*Anahtar Sözcükler: Demokrasi, Demokratikleşme, Koruyucu Devletler, Tanınmamış Devletler, Vesayet Rejimi*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

There is a surge of interest in unrecognized or de facto states that are entities that function over a certain territory and have popular support, but are denied legitimacy by the international society (Pegg, 1998). Unlike the studies that analysed these states in the realm of international relations, students of political science started exploring the domestic politics of these states which proved

resilient to pressure from their parent states. Earlier discussion on the domestic politics of de facto states concentrated on state-building. Whereas King (2001) and Pegg (1998) argued that de facto states managed to provide their citizens with resources similar to many recognized states and proved resilient, Lynch (2004) and Kolstø (2006) argued that de facto states resemble failed states and they will probably disappear from the international scene in time. The first argument seems to be more valid as the internal legitimacy of de facto states proved to be similar to their parent states (Berg, 2012).

Recently, the focus of research has shifted to democratic quality and democratization. Most of the research conducted by scholars indicated that there is no causal relationship between lack of recognition and democratic quality:

*Different from what parent states and some international observers often claim, the entities' governments are no mere pawns, instrumentalized arbitrarily by the patron states. Even if they heavily depend on the patron state in terms of economic, military and infrastructural assistance, they are well able to make their own decisions as to political institution building, modes of elections or policy planning (von Steinsdorff, 2012: 201-202).*

If there is a relationship, it is positive. This is because these states see democratization as a means toward gaining the sympathy of the Western world and achieving recognition (Caspersen, 2008; 2011; 2012; Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2012a; Smolnik, 2012; Voller, 2014). These scholars argue that we are observing gradual democratization in these states and when we assess the quality of democracy in these states; negative assessments arise mainly because we compare them to dissimilar states that score very high in quantitative indexes. If, however, we are to compare the quality of democracy within these states with their parent states or similar states in their region, we would understand that the consolidation of democracy in de facto states is possible (Caspersen, 2008; von Steinsdorff, 2012).

Although this argument moves us beyond the simplistic view that democratization in these states is not possible at all, it makes us oversee a crucial aspect that is more or less common to all of these states, including: Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and to an extent Nagorno-Karabakh and Somaliland too<sup>1</sup>. Although these states may be able to strengthen their democratic institutions, lack of recognition and pressure from the parent state that results in economic and military dependence make them prone to excessive influence from their patron states. By excessive influence, what is meant is; influence that hinders the freedom of the executive, regarding matters that any liberal democracy should take decisions without interference from other states. In the next parts of this article, tutelary democracy is conceptualized and then a logic of exchange between unrecognized states and

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<sup>1</sup> In line with Caspersen (2012) I do not consider Taiwan, Kosovo, Palestine or Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic as unrecognized states because they are recognized by a considerable number of states and/or many states have diplomatic and economic relationships with them that makes them distinct from unrecognized states, putting them at the borderline between being a recognized and an unrecognized state.

their patron states is formulated. The implications of the argument are discussed in the final part.

## 2. CLASSIFYING REGIMES: TUTELARY DEMOCRACY AS A SUB-TYPE OF DEMOCRACY

The crudest definition of democracy is that it is the rule of the people. Popular control and political equality are two undisputed characteristics of democracies (Beetham, 1999). Scholars have been studying how to conceptualize and measure democracy since decades. It is possible to argue that there are three ways of conceptualizing and measuring democracy. The first way is to measure democracy on an interval scale like most measures of democracy including Freedom House and POLITY IV. According to this logic, a regime is democratic to the extent that it satisfies certain criteria such as ensuring free and fair elections, civil rights, participation etc. Due probably to lack of recognition, most democracy measures do not include de facto states. One exception is the widely used Freedom House index. According to Freedom House, the TRNC is classified as 'free' (democratic) in 2014 receiving a score of 2 on a 1 to 7 scale each year (1 implies that a country is fully democratic). There is variation in the democracy scores of de facto states. Whereas Somaliland, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh are classified as 'partly free', receiving a score of 4.5, 4.5 and 5 respectively. Transnistria's and South Ossetia's scores are 6 and 6.5 which would classify them as 'not free' by Freedom House.

A fundamentally different way of conceptualizing and measuring democracy is the application of the Aristotelian logic to classifying regime types. This approach, as pioneered by Sartori (1970), Limongi *et alii* (1996), Przeworski and Limongi (1997) and Alvarez *et al.*, (1996) argues that the classification should come before measurement. In Sartori's words: '*Measurement of what? We cannot measure unless we know first what it is that we are measuring. Nor can the degrees of something tell us what a thing is*'. (Sartori, 1970: 1038). Although Sartori is right in arguing that we need to be able to say what the phenomenon we are observing actually is, there is nothing logically or methodologically wrong with measuring how democratic a regime is and then giving a democracy score to it, if we can effectively conceptualize and operationalize what we want to measure. A democratic regime may not only be more democratic than another democratic regime but it may also be more democratic than an authoritarian state (Elkins, 2000; Munck and Verkuilen, 2002; Coppedge *et al.*, 2011; Bühlmann *et al.*, 2012).

A third way of conceptualizing and measuring democracy is to use sub-types that can capture different defects which make these regimes a sub-type of democracy and not a liberal democracy<sup>2</sup> (Collier and Levitsky, 1997; 2009; Collier and Mahon, 1993). Depending on the characteristics of a hybrid regime that has a defect, when the ideal is embedded democracy, different regimes may be classified as different sub-types of democracy (Diamond, 2002; Merkel, 2004).

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<sup>2</sup> This logic can also be applied to authoritarianism (see Levitsky and Way, 2002; Schedler, 2002; Linz and Stepan, 1996).

For instance, Zakaria (1997) argues that democracies that have free and fair elections cannot be classified as liberal democracies if the state does not ensure individual and minority rights. Such a regime would be classified as illiberal democracy. Or consider a scenario where vertical accountability is achieved by popular control but horizontal accountability is missing as the executive cannot be subjected to control by the legislative or the judiciary. Such a case would be classified as delegative democracy (O'Donell, 1994).

One should note that classifying countries as sub-types of democracy would not mean that comparison in degrees between two countries classified under the same sub-type is not possible. Quantitative gradation is still possible between two countries classified as one sub-type of democracy. It is possible, even between two countries classified as two different sub-types of democracy. However, classification here is more important than in quantitative grading. Classifications allow us not to restrict ourselves to 'more or less democratic' (Wigell, 2008). However, one should have in mind that if it is hard to draw the line between democracies and non-democracies for Freedom House (Bogaards, 2012), it is probably even harder to distinguish between the sub-types of democracies and non-democracies.

Tutelary democracy, protected democracy, democracy with reserved domains or domain democracy are some concepts that are used for the regimes where elections may be held freely and fairly while the elected government faces non-democratic control, as a result of pressure from non-democratic actors (Valenzuela, 1992; Loveman, 1994; Przeworski, 1988; Rabkin, 1992; Merkel, 2004). Examples usually include tutelage by the military but also tutelage by the elites such as judges. Chile after Pinochet, Portugal after the 1974 revolution, Guatemala in the late 1980s and Turkey until the 2000s can all be classified as tutelary democracies. In the case of Kosovo, one can discuss tutelage by the international actors (Tansey, 2007; 2009). What makes a country fit the tutelary democracy description, therefore, is the existence of electoral democracy in the sense that elections take place regularly but, when a legitimate government is elected, non-elected actors constrain the democratic policy-making process. In the next part, I will present a framework of why non-recognition limits unrecognized states' democratization potential to being a tutelary democracy rather than a full-fledged embedded democracy.

### **3. A MODEL OF EXCHANGE BETWEEN DE FACTO STATES AND PATRON STATES**

One can model the interaction process between de facto states and patron states as a repeated exchange game which shows that the democratization process in de facto states can, at best, end up with tutelage. De facto states need resources in order to survive (Caspersen, 2012: 56-57). Parent state is the country which a de facto state secedes from. Parent states claim sovereignty over the de facto state which breaks away. Parent states, however, cannot exercise this sovereignty since de facto states guard their 'borders' with military force. Parent states, however, create a threat to the survival of unrecognized states' statehood. Parent states

utilize military tactics in order to subsume the seceded territory back under their sovereignty. Parent states also use lobbying tactics on the international arena to put de facto states into an economically and socially difficult situation.

Patron states refer to states which provide unrecognized states resources and guard them against the threat of annihilation as a result of parent states' actions. Patron states do not necessarily come into the picture in order to maximize economic or political benefits, although this is usually the case. Ethnic kinship or strategic interests may both play a role in patron states' decision to assist de facto states. Even though ethnic kinship may play a part in patron states' decision to help de facto states, one can argue that assistance to de facto states may not be sustainable in the case of continued disobedience by de facto states toward their patron states. As de facto states know that the exchange process with their patron states may be an infinite repeated game, they cooperate with their patron state by offering it control of the decision-making process. This allows patron states to pursue their strategic, economic and political interests in de facto states. In the case that de facto states defect in this game, it is more likely that patron states do not immediately cut their economic and military help. Only the reiteration of such instances may cause this. Nevertheless, patron states may send signals to de facto states that disobedience will be punished. This may explain, for example, how Abkhazia may get away with occasional disobedience towards Russia during election times and still be tutelaged in case it cooperates with Russia with respect to subsequent issues that are of importance to Russia (Ó Beacháin, 2012).

According to Caspersen: '*De facto states have an agenda of their own, which is often contrary to that of their external supporters, and the relationship is often fraught with tensions*' (Caspersen, 2009: 58). This is a well informed observation. The argument proposed in this paper also takes into account the differences of preferences between de facto states and patron states (Matsuzato, 2008: 98-99; Caspersen, 2009). It goes a step further, however, by arguing that the differences in preferences and the tensions that arise as a consequence of these differences do not imply that de facto states are able to enact and implement the policies of their own choosing. It is one thing to have varying interests and preferences and another thing to have the power to pursue those interests and preferences. Unrecognized states may have many other democratic defects too, which makes it hard for us to classify them as a specific sub-type of democracy or authoritarianism<sup>3</sup>. However, one common characteristic of these states is that their democratization process has not changed the fact that their internal affairs have been heavily influenced by a patron state.

Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora were mainly responsible for successful state-building in Nagorno-Karabakh (Caspersen, 2008: 119; 2009, Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2012a; 2012b). According to Kolstø (2006), Transnistria wouldn't have existed if not for the Russian army. The Russian military also played a crucial role in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Nagorno-Karabkh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria still rely on Armenia and Russia for military and financial assistance and international isolation is without a doubt a factor to

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<sup>3</sup> It is worth mentioning that mixed forms of sub-types of democracy are seen in recognized states too (Bogaards, 2009: 404).

explain this phenomenon (Kolstø and Blakkisrud, 2008; Caspersen, 2008: 120; 2009). Geldenhuys (2009) argued that Somaliland did not have a patron state. This may partly be because Somalia, which is the parent state is a failed state, thus inhibiting its role as an effective threat towards security and development of Somaliland and partly because there was no patron state based on ethnic kinship. One should, however, not overlook the fact that together with the help of the Diaspora, the United States and other international actors have been indispensable actors, enabling the survival of Somaliland (Caspersen, 2009: 51; 2012: 59, 61).

Even though the TRNC did not have external legitimacy, Turkish Cypriots were able to trade with countries other than Turkey until 1994. In 1994, the European Court of Justice's verdict (1994) was to ban trade with the TRNC. Before 1994, the main trade partner of the TRNC used to be the United Kingdom (Katircioglu, 2010). Since then, exports have decreased but imports have actually increased as a result of economic growth (Özyigit, 2008; Ozdeser and Ozyigit, 2007). Economic growth, however, was 'artificial' as it simply reflected the economic aid from Turkey (Özyigit, 2008; Ozdeser and Ozyigit, 2007). Turkish aid was used to employ the Turkish Cypriots as civil servants. As a result, the Turkish companies gain a market where they can sell their products. This, of course, kills productivity and increases inflation in the country. In 2005, Turkey assisted the TRNC with \$217.2 million (Özyigit, 2008). Within the period from 1974 to 2004, Turkey provided \$3.07 billion to the Turkish Cypriots (Sonan, 2007). The Turkish government is responsible for most of the major infrastructure projects that took place in the TRNC (Bahceli, 2004; Isachenko, 2009). In 2008, 46% of the total exports of the TRNC went to Turkey and imports from Turkey totaled 60.1% of the whole imports (Katircioglu, 2010).

Gökçekuş (2008) asks the counterfactual in order to show that the isolation was highly costly for the Turkish Cypriot community. To calculate the costs of the isolation, Gökçekuş (2008) puts the TRNC in comparative perspective with the Republic of Cyprus. Gökçekuş (2008) calculates the total cost of isolations to be \$51.6 billion to date which corresponds to \$232 thousand per Turkish Cypriot living in the TRNC. Other authors also argued that non-recognition and subsequent isolation have created major negative consequences for the Turkish Cypriot community making the TRNC dependent on Turkey (Bahceli, 2004; Berhan and Jenkins, 2012; Warner, 1999; Katircioglu, 2010).

Besides economic dependence, unrecognized states are *ceteris paribus* more dependent on the military aid of a patron state than recognized states. In the case of Cyprus, the will to take back the lands in the north is especially important for the Greek Cypriots because the refugees that left the north after 1974 amount to 160,000. Refugees represent a powerful lobby group in the Republic of Cyprus (Özersay and Gürel, 2006; Ker-Lindsay, 2014). The state even provides them with buildings to have the 'real' municipalities for the cities left behind in the north. Also, Greek Cypriots feel the injustice of being invaded and not being able to get their revenge due to the disproportionate military power of Turkey. This causes frustration among the Greek Cypriot community which makes them even more motivated to isolate the TRNC as much as possible and seek ways to annex it (Ker-Lindsay, 2014).

The official position of the Greek Cypriot state is that a state has the right to use force to “*exercise its authority over secessionists in the contested area (subject only to the law of human rights and international humanitarian law about the manner in which it does so), and it is appropriate from other States not to interfere in the matter*” (Republic of Cyprus 2009 quoted in Ker-Lindsay, 2014). However, the Republic of Cyprus knows that using military force against the Turkish forces would only bring devastation to the country (Ker-Lindsay, 2014). On the other hand, if the Turkish Cypriots had not been able to secure military aid from Turkey, one could argue that the Greek Cypriot army could have easily defeated the Turkish Cypriot army which would have been around three times smaller than the Greek Cypriot army. Furthermore, the Greek Cypriot army would have obtained more and better weapons as a result of the asymmetrical economic power of the two communities. As a result, the TRNC relies on circa 35000 soldiers that Turkey stations in the breakaway region.

Patron states do not provide economic and military assistance to unrecognized states for nothing. They expect something in return. They expect the political decisions to be taken in line with their own interests and they usually manage to get things done their way even in the case that their opinions and preferences differ from those of the democratically elected authorities in unrecognized states. In one political election, Russia associated future aid to Abkhazia with the election of its favorite candidate Khadzimba (Matsuzato, 2008: 107). After Russia’s favored candidate lost the election in 2004, Russia tightened up border control with Abkhazia and forced the elected president Bagapsh to accept Khadzimba as vice president with a new election while reforming the institutional structure of Abkhazia by giving the vice president substantial power (Matsuzato, 2008: 107-108). Similarly, Russian influence in South Ossetia has been enormous considering that the Russian military and secret service personnel have occupied key positions in the government (Geldenhuys, 2009: 82). Russia is also responsible for interfering with the political matters in Transnistria (Protsyk, 2012). Igor Smirnov was supported by Russia during the September 2006 referendum which confirmed Transnistria’s independence and consolidated relations with Russia. By pursuing Russian interests and promising institutional reforms requested by Russia, Smirnov secured monetary aid in return. When Smirnov did not abolish full presidentialism which was a reform suggested by Russia to further its control of Transnistria, Russia patiently waited until the next election. The recent defeat of president Smirnov in the 2011 election was mainly due to Russia’s withdrawal of support (Matsuzato, 2008: 14; Protsyk, 2012). One of the factors in explaining America’s support for Somaliland is the ‘war on terror’ in an unstable region (Geldenhuys, 2009: 136). Although this did not create interference in politics to the same extent in the other cases, it does not mean that Somaliland could simply reject what the United States has to say about its domestic politics that has not to do with the issues related to terrorism. The case of Nagorno-Karabakh seems to present some variation from the model proposed in this paper not because there is no tutelage but because the distinction between social, economic, cultural and political aspects of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia have not been so clear (Caspersen, 2009: 49; Geldenhuys, 2009: 101). One can argue that political influence worked in both ways. In the late 1990s a

Karabakh Armenian became the president of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh had a major influence on Armenian politics (Caspersen, 2009: 52-53).

In return for the economic and military aid it received, the TRNC has almost always followed the orders of Ankara with respect to the issues crucial to the latter's interests even in the case that the TRNC's optimal choice was not congruent with Turkey's optimal choice (Bahçeli, 2004). Not only is the Turkish Cypriot military controlled by the Turkish military, the Turkish Cypriot police is also controlled by the Turkish army in Cyprus (Düzel, 2007). One can argue that, while religion has never played an important role in the TRNC, the building of mosques has increased and a relatively more religious curriculum is introduced recently, as a result of the instructions by the conservative AK Party government in Turkey (Çağlar, 2012). It is clearly the case that the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey have had contrasting interests in the past regarding such important issues. This can also be observed by the new public management measures (a part of what is labelled in the country as "göç yasası") that are currently being implemented in the TRNC as a result of Ankara's orders. Such differences with Turkey caused defiance of the Turkish Cypriot labour unions and some left-wing parties (Kanol, 2011). Nevertheless, it is the case that those in power could never substantially disagree with the Turkish government.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, a new framework for explaining democracy and democratization in unrecognized states is presented. The author argues that lack of recognition leads to dependence on a patron state. In return for military and economic help, patron states demand control of the decision-making process in de facto states which means that these states can be classified as tutelary democracies. The argument in this paper implies that putting unrecognized states in the same box with liberal democracies is like comparing apples and oranges and concluding that they are both fruits. Although this might not stretch the conceptual minimalist meaning of democracy, it makes us lose attributes that apply to liberal democracies as we travel upward on Sartori's (1970) ladder of generality.

Not all de facto states have the same level of economic development. Ishiyama and Batta (2012) found that the lower the GDP, the more is the likelihood of the emergence of a dominant party system rather than a multi-party system. One causal mechanism that is in line with the argument presented here is that lower GDP may increase the dependence on the patron state which, in turn, may create a dominant party system with a puppet party ensuring political control in line with the patron state's instructions. Therefore, the author agrees with Caspersen (2008) that economic development can make these states less dependent on their patron states. This could surely enable these states to get into a transition period from being a tutelary democracy to a liberal democracy but the author is more wary of the possibility of such a transition than Caspersen (2008) as it is suspected that these states might never be able to reach the levels of economic development needed when they are subjected to international isolation. Expecting too much



from the capacity of hybrid regimes to transform into consolidated democracies should not only be attributed as a mistake of the scholars who study de facto states but those who study imperfect democracies all around the world (Carothers, 2002). On the other hand, the author agrees with Caspersen (2008) that democratization should be encouraged by the international community by funding and partnerships without a promise of recognition but of ending their isolation so that these entities can be transformed into liberal democracies.

This paper puts forward a new argument with regard to the effect of non-recognition on democracy and democratization potential in unrecognized states. Yet, it should be stressed that the aim of the paper is theory-building rather than theory-testing. Future research might test the argument in this paper by using different strategies. In-depth case studies, Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD), large-N panel data analysis and mixed-methods design combining two or more of these methods can be used to put the argument to robust tests which, in turn, might substantiate the argument in the paper.

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