

**SECESSION AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE RIGHT TO SELF-  
DETERMINATION IN INTERNATIONAL LAW: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS  
OF THE KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE**

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**By**

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Philosophy**

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## **ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini mengkaji mengenai dua prinsip penting di dalam undang-undang antarabangsa iaitu prinsip pemisahan (*secession*) dan penentuan hak sendiri (*self-determination*) dengan menggunakan Kosovo sebagai kajian kes. Kajian ini juga melihat sama ada terdapatnya hak di dalam undang-undang antarabangsa berkaitan dengan pemisahan dan sama ada pemisahan Kosovo adalah sah di sisi undang-undang antarabangsa. Konsep “*people*” sebagai pewaris kepada “*self-determination*” juga dikaji dengan hasrat kepada suatu cadangan diberikan kepada makna “*people*” yang berfungsi dan diterima. Kajian ini menganalisa secara komprehensif terhadap keputusan “International Court of Justice” (Mahkamah Keadilan Antarabangsa) mengenai kemerdekaan Kosovo yang telah diputuskan pada Julai 2010. Analisa secara komprehensif juga dibuat terhadap kes-kes pemisahan di negara-negara lain yang berlaku sebelumnya dan mendapati tidak terdapat suatu hak yang umum mengenai hak terhadap pemisahan di dalam undang-undang antarabangsa. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kajian undang-undang doktrin dan berdasarkan kajian perpustakaan. Hanya ini sahaja kaedah kajian yang sesuai dalam menyelidiki perihal peraturan perundangan dan menganalisisnya berdasarkan fakta-fakta kajian kes. Namun, hasil kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa dalam keadaan-keadaan yang tertentu, pemisahan akan diiktiraf sebagai suatu penyelesaian *remedial* kepada pertelingkahan mengenai penentuan hak sendiri (*self-determination*). Kes-kes lain mengenai bantahan dan penerimaan konsep pemisahan di dalam undang-undang antarabangsa juga dibincangkan. Kajian ini mencadangkan suatu definisi yang berfungsi menjelaskan makna “*people*” dan berpendapat bahawa pemisahan Kosovo berada di dalam skop pemisahan *remedial* yakni yang dibenarkan. Akhirnya, kajian ini juga memberikan cadangan-cadangan yang akan memberikan faedah kepada pembuat polisi, pemegang taruhan dalam undang-undang antarabangsa, penasihat undang-undang termasuk juga kumpulan-kumpulan yang memperjuangkan pemisahan dan dengan ini juga membantu meletakkan dakwaan-dakwaan dan hujahan-hujahan mereka di dalam perspektif yang lebih teratur. Dengan itu juga mengurangkan tindakan keganasan dan pertumpahan darah yang tidak perlu yang selalunya dikaitkan dengan konflik-konflik pemisahan sebegini.

### **Kata-kata Kunci**

Penentuan diri, Pemisahan, Kosovo, Perisyntihan Kemerdekaan Secara Bersendirian, Tanggungjawab Bukan Pengiktirafan

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the twin principles of self-determination and secession in international law, using the Kosovo secession as a case study, with a view to making a finding whether there is an international law right to secession and whether the Kosovo secession was legal in international law. It also examines the concept of “people” as the beneficiaries of self-determination with a view to proposing a functional and acceptable definition of “people”. The study also does a comprehensive analysis of the ICJ Ruling on the Kosovo independence which was delivered in July 2010, while this research was still in its advance stages. The study does a comprehensive factual and legal analysis of previous secession cases in resolving the issues above and has concluded that there is no general international law right to secession. This study is purely a doctrinal legal and library-based research. The only reliable way to do these is by enumerating the established rules and analyzing them in the light of the facts of the case study. It however reveals that in exceptional circumstances, secession will be recognized as a remedial solution to self-determination disputes. Other circumstances in which secession is either supported or opposed in international law are also listed. It also proposes a functional definition of “people” and opined that the Kosovo secession comes within the scope of a remedial secession. Finally, the study has made recommendations towards containing the oft violent crisis engendered by secessionist conflicts. The findings and recommendations will be very useful to policy makers, stakeholders in international law, legal advisors as well as secessionist groups. They will help in putting secessionist claims in their proper perspectives thus, eliminating or at least reducing needless violence and bloodshed associated with such conflicts.

### **Keywords**

Self-determination, Secession, Kosovo, Unilateral Declaration of Independence, Duty of Non-Recognition

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJIL	....	American Journal of International Law
Am. Soc'y Int'l L. Proc.	....	American Society of International Law Proceedings
ASIL Insights	....	American Society of International Law Insights
B.U. Int'l L.J.	....	Boston University International Law Journal
Buff. Hum. Rts. L. Rev.	....	Buffalo Human Rights Law Review
Cal. W. Int'l L.J.	....	California Western International Law Journal
Chinese J. Int'l L.	....	Chinese Journal of International Law
Cornell Int'l L.J.	....	Cornell International Law Journal
Denv. J. Int'l L. & Pol'y	....	Denver Journal of International Law and Policy
EJIL	....	European Journal of International Law
Emory Int'l L. Rev	....	Emory International Law Review
Hastings Const. L.Q.	....	Hastings Constitutional Law Quarterly
Hum. Rts. Br.	....	Human Rights Brief
ICLQ	....	International and Comparative Law Quarterly
ILSA J Int'l & Comp L.	....	ILSA (International Law Students Association) Journal of International & Comparative Law
Loy. L.A. Int'l & Comp. L. Rev.	....	Loyola of Los Angeles International & Comparative Law Review
Minn. J. Int'l L.	....	Minnesota Journal of International Law
Or. Rev. Int'l L.	....	Oregon Review of International Law
Pac. Rim L. & Pol'y J.	....	Pacific Rim Law and Policy Journal
Tul. J. Int'l & Comp. L.	....	Tulane Journal of International and Comparative Law
U. Chi. L. Rev.	....	University of Chicago Law Review
U. Pa. J. Int'l L.	....	University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law
Va. J. Int'l L.	....	Virginia Journal of International Law
Vand. J. Transnat'l L.	....	Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law
Yale J. Int'l L.	....	Yale Journal of International Law
Yale L.J.	....	Yale Law Journal

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

- ASEAN Association of South East Asian Nations  
AU African Union  
CIS Commonwealth of Independent States  
COE Council of Europe  
CSCE Council for Security and Co-operation of Europe  
EC European Council  
ECOWAS Economic Community of West African States  
EU European Union  
EULEX European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo  
FRY Federal Republic of Yugoslavia  
ICJ International Court of Justice  
KFOR Kosovo Force  
KLA Kosovo Liberation Army  
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization  
OAS Organization of American States  
OAU Organization of African Unity  
OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation of Europe  
SFRY Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia  
UDI Unilateral Declaration of Independence  
UN United Nations  
UNCfN United Nations Council for Namibia  
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
UNMIK United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo  
UNTAET United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor  
UNTEA United Nations Temporary Executive Authority  
USA United States of America  
USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Following the intervention of NATO in Kosovo, due to humanitarian concerns arising from ethnic fighting between Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians in 1999, the United Nations set up an interim administration under Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) to oversee the affairs of Kosovo pending a peaceful resolution to the crisis and the Security Council's determination of the future status of Kosovo *vis a vis* Serbia (then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). Attempts by the UN Secretary General's envoy, Martti Ahtisaari and the Troika (USA, Russia and the EU) to reach an amicable solution failed.

So, on February 17, 2008, Kosovo declared independence from Serbia. The declaration has been recognized by at least 85 UN member nations,<sup>1</sup> including the U.S. and some EU nations. Serbia, Russia and some other states condemned the declaration as a violation of international norms. But the US and Britain insist that the Kosovo situation is unique, unprecedented and ought to be recognized. With the active support of Russia, Serbia has successfully requested the UN General Assembly to refer the Kosovo independence issue for the advisory opinion of the

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<sup>1</sup> See list at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_recognition\\_of\\_Kosovo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_recognition_of_Kosovo) last visited on November 16, 2011

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