



Warren Pezé & Daniel E. Rojas (Eds.), International Recognition. A Historical and Political Perspective

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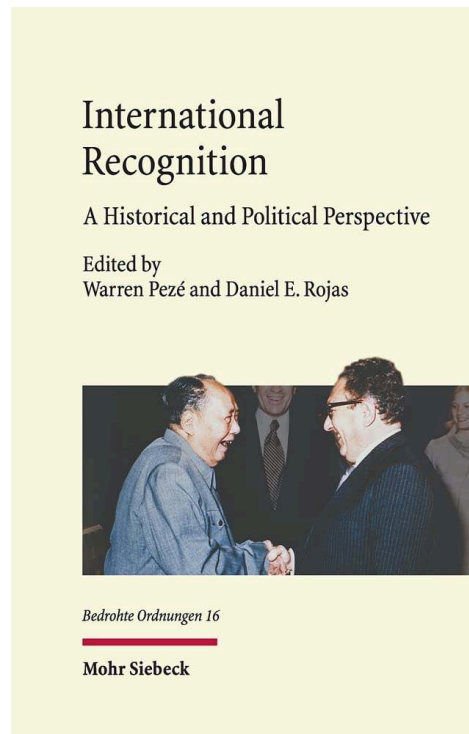
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1 This trilingual edition summons no less than nine different contributions, spans three world regions and more than 2,000 years of history to take up one audacious epistemological challenge: reading the question of international recognition with the concepts of threat and order to dig up common patterns. While the issue of international recognition has been the prerogative of legal and political studies, one of the main strengths of this volume certainly lies in the perspective shift it offers, namely delving into a field of study that was restricted to the modern Western state through historians' eyes and methodologies. In this respect, *International Recognition. A Historical and Political Perspective* can be qualified as both an achievement and a refreshing contribution to the literature on the subject.



2 The epistemological focus of the book is clearly defined in the introductory pages written by Dr Daniel Rojas and Dr Warren Pezé. From the get go, the editors point out the aspects that had been overlooked in the literature. Indeed, historical diversity has been blotted out by too much attention granted to Western modern nations. Each contribution, from Judeo-Roman Antiquity to the Cold War cannot and should not be read as much as a specific study than a conversation between pre-modern and modern civilizations – a dichotomy that Rojas and Pezé dismiss as artificial – to work out how power has been recognized by and between different human communities. The key here is to not merely reduce power to its modern state definition but to enlarge it to the various entities that interact within a specific order. To shore up this argument, the factual example of pre-embassy diplomacy is given.

3 Far from minimizing the legal obligations that come with recognition, the various contributors contend that recognition is first and foremost a political act, and is as such a political resource that may be weaponized, or at least used to strategic ends. Political calculation seems to be the only common thread bringing together all the historical events under study in this volume. The main reason why recognition can be used as a strategic tool is because of its strong performative dimension: there is no act of recognition without some subsequent reordering. In other words, rather than deconstructing the concept of recognition, this piece of work aims at reconstructing it and looking into the inherent restructuring power of an already existing order that comes with the recognition of a given, or emerging, power. On this account, Dr E. Batlursch's work cast a new light on the intrinsic correlation between recognizing and reshaping the existing order. His article looks into how in the 2nd Century BCE, Rome recognized Jewish *ethnos* – and consequently sovereignty – in the wake of the Jerusalem uprisings when a decree by Seleucid King Antiochus IV made Jewish religion a crime. The alliance was not a military, but a diplomatic one. Here, Batlursch looks

into a compelling example of the above mentioned strategic weaponizing of recognition. On the one hand the Jews could benefit from the diplomatic recognition of the hegemonic power of the Roman Empire, and on the other hand Rome sought to topple the Seleucid dynasty through friendship with its Jewish opponent, in a bid to later extend its provinces eastward.

- 4 Speaking of expansion, Dr C. Galle's article takes the reader the early Middle Ages. The contributor delves into the Carolingian Empire and argues that military conquest would have failed if it were not for a mass Christianization campaign of the recently annexed territories. In the context of Charlemagne's conquest, his recognition as a sovereign required a symbology tied to Christianity so as to confer legality and legitimacy to his rule. In this regard, Galle focuses more on symbolic restructuration than international recognition per se. Restructuration came with the fact that Pope Leo III did recognize the Carolingians as the official protectors of papacy. One of the effects of it was that Charlemagne, as opposed to Byzantium, then became the interlocutor of Christian communities abroad (a delegation of rebels from Cordova, as well as the Patriarch of Jerusalem directly addressed Charlemagne to ensure the protection of Christian populations in the Middle East) and Muslim sovereigns. For instance, Caliph Harun al-Rashid sent its representatives from Bagdad to befriend Charlemagne against Byzantium.
- 5 The fact that international order in the European-Mediterranean region relied on the figure of Charlemagne resulted in disputes over succession amongst the emperor's descendants. This is precisely a point that Dr W. Pezé studies in a detailed analysis conducted under the lens of recognition. In the 9th Century, international recognition could only be vouched by, and under, the eyes of Gods. The other main argument for recognition was the unchallenged (apart from within the family sphere) primacy of birthrights, whereby king's sons were automatically entitled to become the legitimate sovereigns. For that very reason, most of the research on the topic has tended to focus essentially on individual actors such as Charles the Bald or the Pope, when non-monarchs started to play an increasingly significant diplomatic role. Pezé's contribution to the literature on the subject therefore offers a new angle. The aim of his chapter is to find out whether diplomacy and treaties between European sovereigns, and their recognition by Frankish bishops among others, may have been a significant driver in the establishment of clear borders and power at the time.
- 6 Dr A. Tischer also pores over the question of imperial fragmentation, this time under the Peace of Westphalia, 1648. Here, the recognition of states and the subsequent reordering that came with it owes more to the need to end a relatively complex European war than individual states' claim for sovereignty. While giving a comprehensive portrayal of the situation, Tischer grants a specific importance to the example of the Swiss Confederacy, which came to be as an alliance between cantons for mutual protection. One of the by-products of it was the necessity to keep away from European disputes. In other words, Switzerland cunningly – but also contingently – managed to secure independence between Habsburg and France in a Europe that needed to ensure order and stability, while gradually abstaining from the game of international politics.
- 7 It is fair to say that the case of the recognition of American independences is in many ways a diametrically opposed example. While the Swiss Confederacy sort of proceeded by trial and error to define its political identity, the project of emerging American

nations in the broad sense of the term was based on a very clear and straightforward premise, namely the structural desire to establish a popular, rather than royal and dynastical, sovereignty. While the literature on the subject has put the main emphasis on historical considerations, Dr D.E. Rojas adds a new dimension to the question by looking into the legal ramifications and change of rhetoric that came with the fragmentation of transatlantic empires. Not only was the severing of ties to European rule a blatant act of treason per se, but the biggest legal hindrance to recognition lied in the fact that the international legitimacy of newly established sovereign nations would only be possible if diplomatic convoys were fully accepted by European powers. Rojas's contribution is replete with compelling historical examples across the so-called new world and the old continent. As a matter of fact, some European powers could recognize a country's sovereignty, as the French did with the independence of the United States, however the very act of recognition could be denied by diplomats. Indeed, from a British constitutional standpoint, the United States' independence was a violation and France was simply not entitled to interfere given that no land had been purchased or conquered in an actual war situation.

- 8 In a Latin-American context, the fundamental requirement for recognition was that it first had to stem from the absolute monarch's approval, and subsequent renunciation of their royal rights over certain territories. Breaking away from imperial yoke was also a legal violation since it did not uphold the principle of political continuity that was in effect at the time. In the case of Colombia, narratives of military expulsions of loyalists were the norm for a long time. That being said, the Colombian example where diplomats were sent to reach an agreement with Spain, which evidences the idea that negotiating a peaceful republican transition was a serious option at the time. The establishment of independent representative institutions then became one of the non-negotiable conditions for legitimate national existence. Such shift was accompanied with the modern rhetoric of "independence and sovereignty".
- 9 Dr G. Schild's input is in many regards complementary insofar as it discusses the United States' – a nation that could be qualified as a post-revolutionary society – diplomatic recognition (or rather non-recognition) of the Soviet revolutionary regime under the Wilson administration. President Wilson's personal aversion to Bolshevism on behalf of its intrinsic anti-democratic nature was the chief cause for Washington's initial diplomatic denial. Schild also manages to reconstruct the international context and the realist and ideological stakes that were prompted by it. The United States was conflicted between its top priority – maintaining Russia's involvement on the Eastern front and political considerations. The seeds of America's ideological foreign policy that were to guide its 20th century approach were planted. In his convincing analysis, the conclusion that non-recognition was the tool used to establish democracy, alongside nonconductive endeavors to dispatch forces to overthrow communism – only helped further consolidate the Soviet regime.
- 10 For newly independent India, the non-recognition of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was not so much a political tool as a pragmatic balancing act between Moscow and the West. Dr A. Das Gupta contends that although Delhi's non-alignment strategy was in effect, the British-educated Indian political elite, together with India's colonial heritage, brought it instinctively closer to the Western bloc. Das Gupta goes as far as calling non-alignment a 'non-policy' (p. 179) as it pertained more to abstaining from taking side than asserting a specific voice. In other words, India's international

trajectory had not been clearly defined; Post-bellum India's interests in Europe were mostly economic and as a liberal democracy, Western German Federal Republic (GFR) offered more trading opportunities than East Germany. Delhi waited until 1972, when the Basic Treaty regulated the relations between both Germanies, to recognize the GDR. As the first nation to get its independence from Britain, India had paved the way for post-colonial Asia and Africa. Consequently, India's foreign policy set the example to be followed and the recognition of the GDR, or North Korea for that matter, had more far-reaching consequences than India's bilateral relations with East Germany or Pyongyang.

- 11 With the benefit of hindsight historians have assessed that satellite popular democracies enjoyed a higher degree autonomy than contemporary literature had reported before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Dr P. Bouillon looks into the specific case of Romania, the recognition of which has already been achieved. That being said, what was really at stake there was the difference between actual independence and independence as Moscow's satellite. The Hungarian revolution of 1956 and Prague's Spring 1968 were brutal reminders that Moscow would resort to force if the communist order was at risk. This is where French diplomacy kicked in.
- 12 By the late 1960s and early 1970s, Ceaușescu's Romania had emerged as a dissident voice – while never questioning the socialist model – and received cautious support from French diplomacy. France adopted a strategy of peaceful rapprochement between Eastern and Western Europe in a bid to gradually erode the communist regime through the promotion of Human Rights out of ideological and strategic concerns. As the number of diplomatic visits between Paris and Bucharest increased, the structural threat for Moscow became apparent (the Warsaw Pact integration was on the line). Bucharest oscillated between provocations towards Moscow – to show the West that Romania was more than ready for full-fledged independence – and allegiance to its already existing Stalinist order. Bucharest did not share Western European conceptions of human rights, which *de facto* brought it closer to Moscow and made recognition from Western democracies difficult to envisage, thereby crushing French efforts to use the recognition of Romania's specific status to alter Soviet domination in Eastern Europe.
- 13 France's weaponization of recognition was only possible in the absence of an overarching central authority that could assess whether an entity claiming its independence meets all the legal criteria to be recognized as such. Dr D. Högger argues that not only have individual States been left with this responsibility, but there is no clearly established pattern, apart from G. Jellinek's theory of the "three elements" in the early 20th century (namely a permanent population, defined territory and effective government). Högger's input sheds light on the reasoning behind granting recognition or not. In this respect, recognition can only be multifaceted, and as the author puts it "declaratory" (p. 212) and not performative, given that the recognition of a country does not result in actual statehood and is therefore insufficient as such. In this concluding chapter, the view that individual States can utilize recognition as a tool is indirectly reiterated since legitimacy supplants legality. Legitimacy is defined by time and the rest of the international community, such as the fairly recent primacy of human rights, but first and foremost by States' own – and potentially fluctuating – interests. HÖGGER's theoretical outlook brilliantly wraps up this volume as if further confirms the editor's basic premise that the very concept of recognition is inextricably linked to order. On all accounts, the theoretical wealth and empirical variety of

International Recognition. A Historical and Political Perspective definitely makes it an academic worthwhile contribution and a valuable perspective opener.

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Palabras claves: reconocimiento internacional, entidad soberana, sistema internacional, orden político

Keywords: international recognition, sovereign entity, international system, political order

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