

Joining the Club? The Politics of Government Recognition

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ABSTRACT

Under international law, when governments come to power through extra-legal means, the governments of other states must decide whether to recognize the new government as a legitimate agent of the state, and we observe considerable variation in who recognizes the new governments, the circumstances under which recognition occurs, and even how long it takes to recognize new governments. This project studies the processes that drive recognition decisions. Despite attempts, mainly by legal scholars, to limit the discretion that third-party governments have in this regard, the institution of recognition has persisted over time. I argue that states use recognition as a political tool to weaken hostile governments and support amicable ones. In addition to these direct self-interested motivations, I also posit that the nature of recognition itself shapes recognition decisions and encourages coordination among potential recognizers with regard to new governments. To support these suppositions, I develop a theory that uses both international legal (IL) arguments regarding recognition and international relations (IR) concepts and speaks to both literatures. IR scholars have developed a significant field of study regarding the recognition of states, particularly with respect to secessionist movements, but to date, there are no empirical studies of the recognition of governments, which are fundamentally distinct events. This project represents the first step in that regard, and I use an event history approach to empirically test how and when countries strategically recognize new governments. Consistent with my theoretical expectations, countries do appear to use recognition to weaken their enemies but do not seem to use recognition to bolster their friends. I also find support that countries coordinate their recognition decisions.

Introduction

On July 15, 2011, the United States, France, and nearly 30 other states recognized the National Transition Council (NTC) as the legitimate government in Libya (Black 2011). The Libya Contact Group, the international community's collective response to the Libyan civil war, issued a strongly worded statement that echoed the sentiments of its individual members (Libya Contact Group 2012). And yet, recognition of the new government was not universal. China and Russia waited nearly two full months before recognizing. The United Kingdom strongly objected to the language used by the Contact Group and refused to endorse it. These decisions to recognize or not a new government all occurred during the civil war that ultimately ended with the death of Muammar Gaddafi and the installation of the NTC as the governing authority in Libya, but many political scientists seemed not to take notice or question any of the recognition decisions.

Few government or leadership changes that take place are as eventful as the Libyan example. The vast majority of changes in the vast majority of governments have little bearing on the international system. Consider that in 2011, the same year Gaddafi was overthrown and killed, there were 32 other world leaders who left office. One retired due to health concerns, two died of natural causes, and 26 others left office in a normal fashion.¹ Two more, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, left office as a result of the Arab Spring in their countries, while Laurent Gbagbo was ousted in Cote d'Ivoire (Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza 2009). The infrequency of these types of events is not noted to trivialize them but rather to highlight the fact that they are the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, it is in these exceptions—specifically in Libya—that we find opportunities for an important and nearly unstudied phenomenon in international politics.

Recognition is a topic that is familiar to many political scientists, especially as the subject relates to the sovereign entities that comprise the international system—states. In fact, the past decade has seen an increase in the number of studies examining recognition or not of secessionist movements around the world.² Yet, similar scholarly appreciation for the recognition of governments has not followed. International legal (IL) scholars have discussed and debated issues surrounding recognition of states and governments for years, but IR scholarship has yet to focus on the politics surrounding recognition of governments.

¹The Archigos project codes the manner of entry and exit for every world leader and uses “regular” to describe leaving office “. . . according to the prevailing rules, provisions, conventions, and norms of the country. . .” (Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza 2009, 273).

²See, e.g., Coggins (2014); Griffiths (2016); Armakolas and Ker-Lindsay (2020); Siroky, Popovic, and Mirilovic (2021).

While states are the fundamental actors in the international system, their governments are the agents through which they interact. Recognition is the process by which those entities are legitimized in the international community, and that legitimacy comes from other states and other governments. This paper focuses on the recognition of governments and provides insight into why and when countries recognize new governments, which is virtually unstudied in IR. It also adds to the growing literature on recognition in general.

Recognition is a legal act with legal consequences, and it is also a political act with political consequences. The rich tradition of international legal analysis focuses on the development of the law surrounding recognition, its interpretation, correct use, and the legal consequences associated with it. That scholarship is discussed in the next section. Following that discussion, I provide an examination of recognition as a political tool and present a theory for how and when countries strategically use recognition to further their own political goals to help friendly governments and punish others. I also offer a system-level theory of a cascade effect of how recognition functions that are consistent with both IL and IR scholarship. Next, I describe the quantitative research design and analysis of recognition decisions from 1995 – 2010 and find support for my theoretical account. Finally, I provide concluding thoughts on where future studies of recognition should be directed.

A Legal Act with Legal Consequences

In very broad international legal terms, recognition refers to the "acknowledgment of the existence of an entity or situation indicating that full consequences of that existence will be respected" (Peterson 1997, 1). Both IL practice and scholarship recognition refers to many more situations and entities than just governments and states. For instance, at various times in history, states were empowered to recognize the status of particular belligerent and insurgent groups and formalize statuses such as war, foreign occupation, and neutrality. Each particular type of recognition comes with certain legal consequences, and those legal consequences can have very real effects.

An illustrative example from United States history is the status of the Confederacy during the Civil War. While the Confederate States never achieved international recognition in terms of statehood, both Britain and France recognized its belligerent status during the American Civil War (Halabi 2012). When President Lincoln blockaded Southern ports in 1861, Jefferson Davis authorized the issuance of letters of marque to southern privateers (2012, 344).³ Britain, France, and other European powers then had to decide whether to recognize the privateers as legitimate—under the laws of war, only a lawful belligerent can issue letters of marque—or declare them to be pirates. Contrary to the wishes of President Lincoln and the Union, the British government officially declared its neutrality status in May of 1861, while France followed in June (2012, 344). The proclamation of neutrality was tacit acknowledgment of the belligerent status of the Confederacy, and along with issuing letters of marque, legitimized belligerents could also contract loans and purchase supplies in neutral nations.

Over the years, the emphasis on formally declaring war, proclaiming neutrality, and granting belligerent and insurgent status has waned, but the practice of recognizing states and governments has remained (Roth 1999; Peterson 1997; Brownlie 2008). This should be unsurprising when one considers the circumstances when each is required. In the case of states, the process is fairly straightforward. Following the dissolutions of the USSR and Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the international community was confronted with dozens of former republics, former sovereign states, newly formed nation-states, and other ethnic groups advocating for statehood. The question of whether to recognize those entities as new states is a politically complex one but identifying the circumstances as to when the opportunity for recognition exists is an easier process.

Identifying instances for the recognition of governments is fairly straightforward as well when one considers the legal definition. First, not all government change necessitates recognition.

Notions of sovereignty and equality among states that have developed over centuries afford states the right to be free from undue external influence (Kelsen 1966, 247-50). Part of that right is the inherent power to choose a method of governance and the manner in which government change takes place (Lauterpacht 1947; Peterson 1997; Brownlie 2008). In short, states establish domestic laws with respect to how they will govern and how power will be transferred from one regime to the next. So long as those particular laws are followed, there is no need for recognition when a new government takes power. When the change arises from a violation of national law, however, recognition becomes a concern.

... as in the latter case [change in violation of domestic law] the replacement of one government by another is often accompanied by revolutionary upheavals in the form of civil wars of differing degrees of intensity and duration and by competing, assertions of power on the part of rival authorities, outside States are frequently called upon to take a decision on the question of which of the contesting parties must be regarded as being the government of the State in question. Or, after the hostilities have ceased, they may have to decide whether the authority which for the time being has triumphantly asserted itself over its opponents may properly be considered to be a government. To take a decision of this nature is to recognize—or refuse to recognize—the government in question (Lauterpacht 1947, 87).

³A letter of marque, also known as a letter of marque and reprisal, authorized individuals to attack and capture ships in the name of a state or government (Garner and Black 2004, 736).

Despite the best efforts of legal scholars and practitioners, there are no agreed-upon rules for the recognition of governments beyond those identifying when it is necessary. Objective criteria proposed in the past, including effective control, democratic rule, and popular support of citizens, have consistently been rejected by states in lieu of a system that prioritizes state discretion in recognition decisions. Put more bluntly, states have consistently worked to ensure that recognition remains a subjective choice. When it has suited their purposes, states have applied some of the above criteria along with others but never in a consistent fashion. Much to the frustration of those who study it, the only consensus among legal scholars is that the decision to recognize governments is a purely political one that nonetheless has legal consequences (Downer 2013; Roth 2010; Kelsen 1966). Those legal consequences include duties, rights, and obligations, and in the case of governments, those are not trivial matters. Once recognition occurs, a new government can fully enter diplomatic relations with countries, as well as negotiate treaties and other agreements. A newly recognized government acquires title to its predecessor's assets (bank deposits, investments, embassy buildings, etc.) in the territory of the recognizing state and is granted access to the domestic courts of the recognizing country (von Glahn and Taulbee 2013, 169).

Legal Principles of Recognition

There are a few key principles of international law that limit the circumstances for the recognition of new governments. First, there is an important distinction to make between a state and its government. The state is the basic unit of analysis in international law, but it must be represented by a concrete entity. That concrete entity is a government, which acts as the legal persona of the state (Roth 1999, 8). Thus, there is a sort of principal-agent relationship wherein the state (principal) and government (agent) are related but also distinct. The second principle is the doctrine of state continuity, which stresses the distinction between a state and its government and ensures that a change in government will not affect the legal status of the state (Peterson 1997, 12). This means that a state can change who or what it is represented by without losing its fundamental identity.

Both of these arguments stem from fundamental dual notions of sovereignty and equality, which treat all states as equal units and assures each will be free from undue external influence (Kelsen 1966, 247-50). Sovereignty thus maintains that each state may select its own method of governance and may change that government in accordance with its own law without any external interference. The important point as it relates to recognition is that the change occurs according to domestic law. If a new government comes to power or makes a claim to power in a manner that is not stipulated by domestic law, other states must choose whom they recognize as the legitimate government (Lauterpacht 1947; Peterson 1997; Brownlie 2008).⁴ Thus there is necessarily a collective element to recognition. The following examples are useful to highlight situations in which recognition is required and in which it is not.

Every four years in the United States, a presidential election takes place. Based on the United States Constitution and other relevant domestic law, habits, and customs, there is an established procedure for the transition of power. As long as elections are valid and the transition is handled smoothly, there is no need for other states to recognize the new government as the legitimate government of the United States. At the other end of the spectrum are the removals of monarchies in Russia (1917), Greece (1973), Iran (1979), and other revolutions or coups d'état that replaced heads of state in an extra-legal manner. In each of these instances, states were able to decide whether to recognize the new government, and state practice varied widely. The United States withheld recognition from the Soviet Union until 1933, while Britain was much quicker; France, Britain, Canada, and the United States almost immediately recognized the new Greek regime; the Soviet Union quickly recognized the Iranian Islamic Republic, while other states did not.

Of course, not all governmental changes are as easily characterized as those indicated above. Consider Haiti in 2004 when, facing civil unrest and rebellion, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide resigned his presidency and left the country. As his successor was sworn in, the UNSC passed a resolution declaring that Aristide had resigned and the new president had been sworn in in accordance with the Haitian Constitution (UNSC Res 1529). For his part, Aristide claimed to have been the victim of a coup orchestrated by the US (CNN 2004). Per the Security Council resolution, recognition of a new government was not required. Similarly confusing is the case of the coup in Thailand in 1951 that replaced the prime minister, reinforced the military hold on the government, but left the king in place. In that case, some states saw the need to extend recognition while others did not (Peterson 1997, 16).

Two more fundamental aspects of recognition related to how state practice addresses ambiguous changes in government. While the manner of recognition and the type of recognition have no practical effect, legal scholars often distinguish between the two. In the first instance, grants of recognition may be expressed or implied. Express recognition usually comes from the executive branch of a recognizing state and is the clearest form of recognition. For example, regarding Libya in 2011, the United States issued a joint statement with the Libya Contact Group as well as issuing a statement from Secretary of State

⁴Many scholars focus on non-constitutional change, but in some instances, the change that triggers a recognition decision might be a violation of basic law or political practice and custom. That is, not every state has enshrined its transition procedures via constitutional law. In any of those situations, the change is extra-legal, which is the term I use from hereon to describe when recognition becomes an issue.

Hillary Clinton acknowledging that the United States officially recognized the NTC as ". . . the legitimate governing authority for Libya, and we will deal with it on that basis. In contrast, the United States views the Qadhafi regime as no longer having legitimate authority in Libya" (US Department of State 2011). Recognition can also be tacit or implied, as many states choose to convey their intention to recognize through some other means. Historically, tacit means have included the establishment of formal diplomatic relations, the establishment of formal consular relations, and/or the conclusion of a bilateral treaty (Peterson 1997, 87). In short, tacit recognition exists when a government performs a bilateral act that is inconsistent with nonrecognition. Whether express or implied, however, the manner in which recognition is given has no effect on its validity.

The second distinction that legal scholars focus on is whether recognition is *de facto* or *de jure*. British practice for some years was to distinguish between these types of recognition in an effort to more or less legitimacy on a regime. *De facto* recognition is considered by some to be a lesser form of recognition, perhaps an acknowledgment of a temporary situation on the ground that might change, while the *de jure* is a more permanent and fuller form of recognition. *De facto* recognition might be given to a group that is struggling for power and appears to have control, and *de jure* recognition is reserved for a later time (Roth 1999, 150). In practice, this often manifested itself in one government's acknowledgment that a new government was in power but that the recognizing government did not fully support the new regime (Peterson 1997, 98). In principle, the distinction is one of degrees but rarely has that distinction had any practical effect (Talmon 1998, 52).

It is abundantly clear that the possibility for recognition only exists when an extra-legal change in government takes place. It is also clear that states other than the one undergoing the change influence whether or not the change is deemed legal. This fact highlights the opportunity for states to use recognition as a political tool. States have attempted to adapt the tool to suit their purposes, but the institution has remained remarkably resilient. Yet how is it that states developed and maintained this power? Two fundamental legal perspectives—the declaratory view and the constitutive view—relate to recognition and the development of the international system as a whole. As I discuss in the next sections, the constitutive view maintains that states have broad discretion in recognizing those entities (states and governments) that will be able to participate in the system. Because state practice has consistently employed, and therefore reinforced, the fundamental precepts of the constitutive perspective, the political use of the institution of recognition continues to this day.

Theories of Recognition

While certain legal systems and principles of international law pre-date the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, most international legal scholars identify that event as the dawning of modern international law. More specifically for legal scholars, Westphalia marked the emergence of an international community of sovereign, equal, and independent states that recognized no superior authority (von Glauhn and Taulbee 2013, 33). This horizontally ordered system was a clear break from the previous feudal hierarchical structure that dominated Europe until that time. The new system would see its membership grow from 25 states in 1815 to just over 50 following World War I and to nearly 200 today (Coggins 2014). The manner in which states enter this system, however, has long been a point of contention between the declarative and constitutive theories of recognition, and this argument is mirrored by the contentions surrounding recognition of governments.

As is the case with many legal arguments, the debate between the declarative and constitutive views reduces to what should be a simple legal question of whether a duty to recognize exists. Proponents of the declarative theory maintain that an entity—a state or a government—exists in law as soon as it exists in fact (Lauterpacht 1947, 38). That is, there should be clear criteria that establish what a state or government is, and once an entity meets these requirements, it should be legally deemed a legitimate state or government. Moreover, there is no discretion with respect to whether recognition as a legal duty exists. The act of recognition is merely a formality—an acknowledgment of an already existing legal fact (Roth 1999, 124). One of the clear implications of such logic is that a new entity can come into existence and obtain legitimacy largely independent of other states in the sense that its identity is established whenever the relevant criteria are met. (Kelsen 1966, 390).

The constitutive theory, meanwhile, strongly opposes the idea that there is a legal duty to recognize new entities. Whereas proponents of the declarative school argue that the legal existence of states and governments begins when established criteria are met, constitutive thinkers argue that the legal existence of new entities derives solely from the will of those that are already established (Lauterpacht 1927, 38). In other words, the constitutive view holds that recognition is a precondition to the existence, legitimacy, and associated legal rights (Brownlie 2008, 87). In this conception, recognition is a matter of sovereign consent and is based on the mutuality of recognition (Menon 1994). Because there is no duty to recognize, states are free to recognize new entities entirely at their own discretion.

In many ways, the arguments for and against the declaratory and constitutive views mirror the larger philosophic debate of naturalism vs. positivism in international law (Roth 1999, 124). Natural law stresses that universal principles exist separate and apart from laws or rules that are created in a given system. Positive international law, meanwhile, asserts that the only law that matters is that which has been created and agreed to by states. The declaratory view of recognition is argued as a far more ethical basis of state emergence as it acknowledges the importance of political self-determination.⁵ Under a declaratory system,

⁵The most notable example of such thinking is reflected in the Montevideo Convention of 1933, which established four criteria for statehood. The

any community that possesses those four criteria has a fundamental right to recognition. A constitutive system, on the other hand, that prizes state sovereignty is necessarily dependent on the decisions of states with respect to recognition. Recognition becomes a political decision and one that states can use to further their own interests.

A Political Act with Political Consequences

A common criticism of international law is that it often does not reflect the political realities of the day or that states simply ignore or enforce it when it is most convenient or expedient (Mearsheimer 1994/95). Much of the work done by IR scholars with respect to recognition involves the recognition of states and broadly falls into two distinct literatures. The first is largely theoretical and/or qualitative in nature, but recently there has been an increased emphasis on quantitative empirical work that has examined recognition, particularly in the case of secessionist movements. One of the first studies in this regard summed up prior work on state emergence and state recognition by stating, "Most theories take the fundamental units of political life to be exogenous. States either exist or do not, and how they come to be is presumed to be relatively unproblematic" (Coggins 2011, 434-35). While the focus of this article is on recognition of governments after an extra-legal change, it is useful to consider the work on recognition of states for the proper context.

Like international legal scholars, political scientists consider the Peace of Westphalia (Westphalia) a formational event in the history of the discipline. A classic retelling of IR history notes the date of Westphalia as the emergence of the modern international system. From that point on, like units struggled to survive in an anarchic system characterized by either conflict or the possibility for cooperation, depending on one's own paradigmatic predilections.⁶ The "states" that make up the system are widely defined in the Weberian sense of the word wherein the "state" is the entity that monopolizes the legitimate use of force in an area. Even Spruyt (1994), who disputes the inevitability of the development of the modern state system, argues that this type emerged as the fittest of all competitors when the new international order was established. In this conception, new states emerge as a bottom-up process as groups develop the means to defend their territory and autonomy (Coggins 2014, 22). Westphalia was the joint acknowledgment of these like entities, and recognition was largely a formality and certainly secondary to the emergence of the system.

An alternative explanation for Westphalia stresses social determinants for the creation of states and the system. According to this view, the entities represented were not what we now think of as states, nor were they all sovereign (Osiander 2001). The relationships they enjoyed were not those of independent and equal units but instead reflected the political reality of the time. For instance, 212 representatives negotiated at Westphalia and were ostensibly treated with reciprocal external sovereignty (Coggins 2014, 23). And yet, some of those representatives were from territories that owed allegiance to the Holy Roman Empire; some were princes that did not have total authority over the citizens in their territory. In short, Westphalia did not represent the mutual acknowledgment of states. Instead, Westphalia created the idea of states while at the same time affirming states as the dominant governmental unit (Osiander 2011). Rather than representing a formality, recognition played a fundamental role in the creation of the actors and their system as it was both mutual and reciprocal among the newly created units.

This notion of socially created states and systems is not new. Bull (1977) specifically argues that the anarchic system that was created was not merely a system but a society of states. In his conception of the international community, a society exists:

When a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, for a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another and share in the working of common institutions. (Bull 1977, 13)

This idea of states as a socially constructed entity finds support in the work of many social constructivists, notably Wendt, who posits a constructivist view of systemic theory where state identities are learned and shaped through their interactions with other states (Wendt 1999). Viewed from this perspective, recognition at Westphalia did not represent a mere formality as a rubber stamp of the status quo, but the very nature of states and their system was constructed through mutual recognition. State creation was and is a top-down phenomenon, and existence and membership are only attainable through the acceptance of others.

The similarities between the legal theories of recognition and the IR conceptions of system emergence are quite evident. Declarative proponents see recognition as a bottom-up process whereby largely domestic factors eventually result in legitimation. Constitutive thinkers argue that legitimacy is dependent on the acceptance of other actors in the system. In other words, whether

Convention itself was a meeting of the International Conference of American States. Thus signatories of the Convention are limited to North and South American states. Nonetheless, the Convention is widely cited as evidence for the declaratory basis for statehood. For a more detailed account of the Convention and some criticisms, see, e.g., Grant (1999); Crawford (1979); Wilson (1937).

⁶Without subscribing to any particular "ism," this seems like a safe claim. Realists and neorealists would not dispute the fact. See e.g., Waltz (1979); Mearsheimer (2001). Likewise, liberals, institutionalists, and neo-liberal institutionalists shift the focus from the idea of the state as a black box, but they too acknowledge the import of states as actors and the lack of central authority. See e.g., Keohane and Nye (2012); Moravcsik (1997).

to recognize or legitimize a new entity is a subjective choice that states can make based on their own calculations. While IR scholars do not use the same language as IL scholars, the concepts are the same. The main difference is that while international law continues to debate which theory of recognition and statehood emergence is preferable, state practice over time has demonstrated a clear preference for the constitutive model.

It is well beyond the scope of this paper to summarize the entirety of the current state of that literature with regard to state recognition.⁷ Nonetheless, a few studies in particular bear discussion with respect to the recognition of governments after extra-legal changes as they are system-wide studies whose underlying logic is applicable to both new states and new governments.

Coggins (2011; 2014) introduces and uses a social model to test the relationships between secessionist movements, recognition, and the role of external politics and external support. She explicitly tests the proposition that recognition is a political choice and that it is largely dependent on societal relationships between states. She likens the international community to an exclusive club to which new members must apply for membership and finds that external politics along with certain domestic factors in the new state are determinate of when states will recognize a new member. Moreover, Coggins uses a case study of international responses to the secession of Yugoslavia (1989-2011) to illustrate the social dynamics inherent in state emergence (Coggins 2014). Coggins's work reflects many previous descriptive accounts of recognition and state emergence and confirms that states seem to use the power related to recognition in a strategic manner.

Duque (2018) approaches the question of recognition from a slightly different perspective by conceptualizing recognition as status in international politics. Similar to Coggins's approach, Duque views recognition through a social lens by examining the relationships between established states and potential new members of the club. Eschewing arguments that statehood is determined by state attributes, Duque finds support for recognition emerging from social networks rather than an acknowledgment of a status quo.

What of recognition of governments? The foremost consequence of recognition, according to Coggins and Duque, is entry into the club. With respect to states, recognition is the acknowledgment of a legitimate peer able to participate fully in the political system. Recognition of governments is no different in this regard. States use the subjective decision of whether to recognize new states as a political tool and that use likewise extends to the decision to recognize governments that come to power through extra-legal change.

Peterson (1982; 1997) provides the only substantive treatments of government recognition in IR, but her work focuses mainly on the development of the institution over time. That is, she traces how the institution has changed based on various influences while making a compelling descriptive case that since at least 1815 states have consistently viewed and used recognition as a political device. In both her article and her book she argues that states strategically choose to grant/withhold recognition to further their foreign policy goals. While she does not use the language of strategic choice explicitly, her argument nonetheless fits within that construct.

As long as new regimes need recognition, and other governments' recognition decisions are not so predetermined by application of legal rules that they become matters of routine, governments can exploit a new regime's need of recognition for policy ends by withholding recognition unless or until the new regime does certain things. These policy ends might involve collective protection of particular shared values, but more frequently have involved the seeking of individual advantages (Peterson 1997, 3).

Peterson's account of recognition provides an even starker description of the political use of the institution with respect to governments as opposed to states. Consider that legal scholars and practitioners have had some success implementing the Montevideo criteria for statehood and moving the decision away from a purely political choice. Those criteria are: (1) a permanent population; (2) a clearly defined territory; (3) a government; and (4) the capacity to enter relations with other states. (Organization of American States 1933, Art. 1). While they are certainly not always followed, questions about whether a particular entity is, in fact, a state tend to revolve around those four factors. Ryngaert and Sobrie (2011), for instance, argue that state decisions regarding the situations in Kosovo, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia call into question whether the Montevideo criteria have any real power, as states seemingly ignored unequivocal facts related to those entities' claims of statehood.

Similar efforts have been made with respect to governments, but states have consistently refused to adopt objective criteria that would limit their discretion. Proposed criteria over the years for new governments have included: (1) the consent of the governed as evidenced through ratification of a constitution or subsequent elections (Latuerpacht 1947, 115-40); dynastic legitimacy (Roth 1999, 142); a non-revolutionary ascent to power (1999, 144); and a democratic form of government (Downer 2013) to name a few. In reality these criteria largely reflect the preferences of the major powers at the time and how they viewed their own claim to legitimacy. For instance, that a legitimate government is one that rules by divine right clearly reflects the preference and practice of states in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Likewise, in 1907 Guatemala, El Salvador,

⁷Without being an exhaustive list of relatively recent book-length treatments, see, e.g., Fabry (2010); Sterio (2012); Griffiths (2016); Visoka, Doyle, and Newman (2020); Ker-Lindsay and Fabry (Forthcoming). For more narrowly focused work, see, e.g., Caplan (2005); Mirilovic and Siroky (2015); Armakolas and Ker-Lindsay (2020); Siroky, Popovic, and Mirilovic (2021).

Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica agreed to a treaty that would limit recognition of governments that were violently overthrown (Roth, 1999, 144). None of these politically expedient criteria have remained over time. History shows that the only criteria that seems to have had any sort of lasting effect is that before a new government can be recognized it must have effective control of the state, but even the importance of that criterion was ebbed and flowed over time (Peterson 1997, 36).

To summarize the discussion to this point, recognition is an institution that should be important to both international legal and international relations scholars. At its core, the question of recognition is fundamental to both because it relates directly to the units of interest of each discipline and how they interact. Legal scholars have long debated issues associated with recognition, and international relations scholars have largely focused on state recognition. It is hopefully clear by now that while we know much about the institution of recognition, we lack theoretical accounts and empirical testing regarding its use as applied specifically to recognition of governments after extra-legal change. In the next section, I outline the political effects of recognition as well as proposing my theory regarding the political use of recognition.

A Political Theory of Recognition

There are a few important points to note as they affect this theoretical account as to exactly what type of recognition is of most interest to the study. First, under international law recognition of a government is required whenever a new government comes to power via a means not contemplated by domestic law or custom. A government of a new state seeking international recognition might qualify under this definition. However, the process of recognizing new states—and by association their new governments—is fundamentally different than the situation where recognition is required due to a leader transition in an established state. Without question there are additional calculations that take place when recognizing a new state, and my theory of government recognition would not apply in those instances. Second, recognition here refers to a unilateral act as part of a bilateral relationship. That is, the recognition decision of interest in is when one country grants recognition to the new government in another country. This contrasts to other types of recognition that could be studied. For instance, the Credentials Committee is part of the United Nations General Assembly and is responsible for accrediting member-states delegations. While infrequent, the Committee has been called on to determine which delegation is the legitimate representative for a particular member-state (Ratliff 2009). Here, the analysis is limited to the international legal definition of recognition, which contemplates a unilateral decision on the part of a potential recognizer, though recognition as part of multi-lateral relations might be of interest in future work.

The bilateral nature of the relationship surrounding recognition questions suggests an important theoretic insight moving forward. In offering a critique of the early work on third-party interventions into civil conflict Findley and Teo (2006) provide a workable structure that focuses on the actors involved and not necessarily the phenomenon of interest. For instance, early intervention studies focused on attributes of the conflict that attracted intervention (Regan 1998; 2000) and whether interventions increased the severity (Balch-Lindsey, Enterline and Joyce 2008) or duration of conflicts (Regan 2002). While important, studies like these are what Findley and Teo call phenomenon-centric in that they explain less about the motivations of actors than they do about the conflicts themselves.

The authors go on to suggest an actor-centric framework that they argue is more applicable to the foreign policy decisions that are often at the heart of intervention questions. Findley and Teo then use the actor-centric focus to look at convergent and divergent interests between potential interveners, as well as potential interveners and conflict states. Such an approach is attractive given the nature of recognition described to this point. It is possible to identify convergent and divergent interests—or what potential recognizers perceive those interests to be—that should have an effect on the decision to recognize. Such an approach is also consistent with the international legal community's complaints that recognizers act politically (i.e. in their best interests), as well as with Coggins's formulation of state interests with regard to the recognition of states. All that remains is to identify the interests and particular relationships that drive the decision to recognize a new government.

One of the prime motivations identified throughout IR literature is the notion of security. It seems fair to assume that most states want to survive and that a major concern should therefore be their external security. Any decision about recognizing a new government should be made with an eye toward security, and this means that countries should use recognition to weaken their enemies and to strengthen their friends. Consider that in a recognition scenario there are three main actors: (1) the potential recognizing government; (2) the previous government in the country that experienced an extra-legal change; and (3) the new government in the country that experienced an extra-legal change. When a new government comes to power there is likely some uncertainty about what its policies will be and how any relationship with other governments will take shape. Based on its interactions with a previous regime, however, a potential recognizer knows whether the relationship was favorable, hostile, or something in between. That relationship will determine whether a potential recognizer will, in fact, recognize a new government.

This enmity-amity dynamic suggests two different mechanisms at work. In the case of enmity, recognition potentially serves a number of functions. First, if the previous regime was hostile, recognition represents a formal means of denouncing and replacing that regime with a new one. Helping to effectuate regime change could also build favor with a new regime. More

cynically, a potential recognizer may wish to add to the chaos and unstable political environment by granting legitimacy to a group that is challenging the hostile regime. Byman et al. (2001) and Saideman (2002) offer these and other motivations for why states support some insurgencies and not others, but the core argument is that that states seek to weaken their most threatening enemies. In terms of recognition, this means that an antagonistic relationship with a prior government should increase the likelihood that a potential recognizer grants legitimacy to a new regime. Consistent with that logic:

- *H1 (Enmity): A country is more likely to recognize a new government when a hostile relationship exists with the previous regime in a country that experiences an extra-legal change.*

While enmity suggests that potential recognizers are more likely to recognize new governments as a means to weaken their enemies, amity suggests that potential recognizers should use recognition to strategically bolster friends and allies. Ensuring that amicable governments maintain legitimacy directly increases external security by ensuring that hostile governments does not come to power, as an ally should be less likely to attack. It also has more indirect effects, though, as amicable and like-minded governments make cooperative tasks easier. Trade, for instance, is far more likely when a stable relationship exists between two countries. Potential recognizers should prefer a government that it has enjoyed an amicable relationship and should resist change by hesitating for refusing to acknowledge a new regime that comes to power extra-legally. In short, an amicable relationship with a prior government should decrease the likelihood that a potential recognizer grants legitimacy to a new regime. Thus:

- *H2 (Amity): A country is less likely to recognize a new government when an amicable relationship exists with the previous regime in a country that experiences an extra-legal change.*

In addition to the enmity-amity dynamics at work, the nature of recognition itself suggests another theoretic expectation. I have argued that countries have adopted and maintained the constitutive model of recognition with regard to both states and governments, and the primary mechanism that underlies the constitutive model is the notion that state and governments hold the power of legitimacy. That is, like a club good that individuals can be excluded from enjoying, recognition is an action that opens the doors of the club to new members. However, no one country holds the key. Much like the norm life cycle that requires a tipping point before norm adoption and internalization (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998), a similar critical mass of countries must recognize a new government before it is legitimized

Since membership is contingent on multiple countries recognizing a new government, this suggests the possibility of strategically coordinated action on the part of potential recognizers. It makes little sense for only one country to recognize a new government because no one country's decision constitutes recognition by the community. In fact, by acting alone a recognizer risks drawing the ire of other potential recognizers that could make acceptance of the new government more difficult on the whole. If potential recognizers actions are coordinated it should make recognition easier and quicker. Thus,

- *H3: As the number of recognizers increases, the likelihood of recognition should increase.*

Quantitative Research Design and Analysis

Irregular Leader Entries as Extra-Legal Changes and Opportunities for Recognition

Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza (2009) developed the Archigos project, which is a comprehensive dataset on political leaders from 1875-2004. Along with capturing leader attributes, the authors identify and code the manner in which every leader assumed and left office. That is, based on Gleditsch and Ward's (1999) identification of independent states, Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza identify the "effective primary ruler" in every state and record the manner in which they came to and left power. They code each entry and each exit as either regular or irregular depending on the manner in which it occurs. More specifically:

We identify whether leaders are selected into and leave political office in a manner prescribed by either explicit rules or established conventions. In a democracy, a leader may come to power through direct election or establishing a sufficient coalition of representatives in the legislature. Although leaders may not be elected or selected in particularly competitive processes, many autocracies have similar implicit or explicit rules for transfers of executive power. Leader changes that occur through designation by an outgoing leader, hereditary succession in a monarchy, and appointment by the central committee of a ruling party would all be considered regular transfers of power from one leader to another in an autocratic regime (Archigos v. 2.9 Codebook 2009).

Since the end of World War II there have been more than 2,000 leadership changes in countries around the world. More than 80% of those changes were normal: in democracies elections were held; in monarchies, the line of succession was followed; in Communist countries, the Party chose the next leader. A significant number of changes, however, were irregular—they did not conform to the laws, customs, or common practices of a country.

Recognition Events

The previous discussion of the legal aspects of recognition highlighted the manner in which it can be conferred by one country to another. Recall that legal scholarship and state practice differentiated recognition on the bases of *de facto* versus *de jure* and *express* versus *implied*. As Talmon (1998) notes, the distinctions were often attempts by states to confer more or less legitimacy on a new government or to avoid scrutiny of their *express* intention to do so, but the practical effect was that states recognized governments as legal and legitimate entities capable of carrying on bilateral relations. Moreover, the distinctions more often than not simply reflected the manner in which it was conveyed and not much else. Tracing the history and evolution of recognition with respect to governments, Peterson (1997, 111-18) highlights some of the historic debates among scholars and practitioners as to what type of actions constitute recognition. Some legal scholars asserted that nothing short of a formal grant of recognition will suffice, while others posit that actions such as the provision of aid (humanitarian, economic, or military) is sufficient. Contemporary practice, as Peterson indicates, is that recognition can be conveyed by any formal means—bi-lateral government to government action—that is inconsistent with nonrecognition (1997, 87). Put more simply, an act that treats a government as a legitimate and equal entity is sufficient for recognition.

The best means of identifying recognition events is an archival news search. The Integrated Early Warning System (ICEWS) project codes events from worldwide news sources dating to January 1, 1995 (Boschee, et al 2015). The dataset relies on automated event coding and follows the Conflict and Mediation Event Observations (CAMEO) coding scheme, which codes events around the world according to approximately 300 event codes ranging from the detonation of a nuclear weapon to a public statement (Schrodt 2012). Crucially, ICEWS include the actors involved in an event as well as the date of an event, which allows identification of recognition events and the day on which they occurred.

Conceptually recognition is an act that confers legitimacy on another party. It indicates a willingness to treat another party as an equal. Operationally recognition events are defined here in a relatively narrow fashion. From the CAMEO coding scheme, I identify three events as recognition events: (1) a grant of diplomatic recognition, (2) an act of diplomatic cooperation, and (3) the signing of a formal agreement. While the first and third events are clear, an act of diplomatic cooperation refers to the initiation, resumption, or expansion of diplomatic efforts that do not include things like praise or endorsement of a policy or political actor, verbal defense or justification of a policy or actor, or a rally of support on behalf of a policy or actor (Schrodt 2012, 31-2). Crucially, each of these actions are visible events between governments. Focusing solely on formal grants of recognition ignores the reality that many countries prefer to confer recognition in a tacit manner. Limiting my operational definition to those formal grants plus diplomatic cooperation and the signing of formal agreements, meanwhile, coincides with the conceptual definition, accords with country practice, and prevents a dilution of the concept by conflating it with extraneous events.

Model Selection

As the theoretic hypotheses suggest, the focus of this study is not just if recognition occurs but instead when it occurs. Briefly, event history analysis is appropriate where the event of interest is tied to the history preceding the event. I argue that the decision to recognize a new government is not made based entirely on contemporaneous factors, but that it is also a result of previous events and interactions. In other words, event history analysis is useful when questions about *when* and *if* it happens at all (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004, 1).

Conducting event history analysis necessitates the use of a certain types of models that are alternately referred to as survival models, hazard models, failure-time models, duration models, and more. The various names come from the processes being studied, which typically include time-to-event or time within a particular state. I use a Cox proportional hazard model (Cox 1972) to estimate the effect of my independent and control variables on the time it takes for recognition to occur. Unlike parametric models, the Cox model does not make any assumptions about the underlying functional form of the distribution of the residuals making it preferable over many models.

Variables

Dependent Variable. The dependent variable is *Recognition* and is dichotomous taking the value of 1 in a year that a potential recognizer confers recognition on a government that has come to power via an extra-legal change and 0 otherwise.⁸ Technically, when using a Cox model there is no dependent variable specified as the variable of interest serves as the censoring variable and the true dependent variable is a function of time and that variable. For these purposes, however, it is best to think of *Recognition* as the dependent variable. It is coded based on the ICEWS data, and it captures the first recognition event that occurs between a potential recognizer and a new government.

The ICEWS data is limited in that it only codes events dating back to 1995. In that timeframe there were 32 instances of an extra-legal changes providing the opportunity to record a recognition event. Rather than examining whether every country in

⁸In addition, I code a variable *Recognition_Type*, which is a variable that captures specifically what recognition event took place. It takes values of 1, 2, or 3 that correspond to the CAMEO event codes for a grant of diplomatic recognition, diplomatic cooperation, and signing a formal agreement, respectively.

the world recognized a new government, I limited the analysis to politically relevant dyads including local and regional powers. Therefore, each case had a minimum of five potential recognizers while most had more. Moreover, many cases span multiple years, which means there were often multiple dyad-years within each case. The 132 recognition events represent the fact that recognition took place in 13.6% of the dyad-years.⁹ Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for time to recognition.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics – Summary of Survival Times

Data	Total Time at Risk (Days)	Mean Time at Risk (Days)	Survival Time		
			25%	50%	75%
1995-2010	247370	702.76	404	1378	3428

Explanatory Variables. The main theory being tested rests on the fundamental assumption that states are rational actors and will act in their best interests. One of the ways that states can act rationally is to act strategically to weaken their enemies and strengthen their friends or allies. When one considers the benefits of recognition—external legitimacy in the international community, internal legitimacy for a new government, access to state assets, legal authority to make and sign international agreements—it is clear that recognition can be leveraged as an important political tool.

The first two hypotheses reflect the relationship that a potential recognizer has with the government that is being replaced. That is, rather than look at the attributes of a new government, many of which may not be immediately clear in the aftermath of an extra-legal change, potential recognizers base their recognition decision on previous interactions. The first hypothesis is the *Enmity Hypothesis* and posits that countries will seek to weaken their enemies. If a hostile government is replaced, countries should act quickly to recognize the new government as this provides legitimacy and credibility to the new government at the expense of the prior regime. In other words, when a hostile government is replaced, the time to recognition should decrease.

To test the concept of hostility I use the variable *Hostility*, which is taken from the Correlates of War (COW) Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data (Ghosen, Palmer, and Bremer 2004; Ghosen and Bennett 2003; Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996). In the MID dataset disputes are coded in years that they are initiated and/or ongoing. *Hostility* is coded in a similar fashion in my data and takes a value of 1 in every year that there is a MID ongoing or initiated between a potential recognizer and the state that experiences an extra-legal change of government and 0 otherwise. Because I focus on the interaction with the previous regime, I used a lagged version of the MID variable. For instance, in the case of Iran 1979, *Hostility* takes the value of 1 for any potential recognizer that either started or had a MID going with Iran in 1978.

The second hypothesis, the *Amity Hypothesis*, focuses on whether or not an amicable relationship exists with the government that has lost power. Just as a country should want to weaken its enemies it should want to bolster its friends. Thus, if a friendly government experiences an extra-legal change a potential recognizer should withhold recognition from the new government. Stated in terms of the model, when a friendly government is replaced the time to recognition should increase. It is important to note the operationalization of two separate concepts (enmity and amity) and therefore the need separate measures for each.

I test the *Amity Hypothesis* using three different variables that seek to capture two types of amicable relationships. The first relationship I test is whether or not the two countries share an ideological link. Like Coggins (2011) I use the Polity IV data's democracy and autocracy scores to create two dichotomous variables, *Mutual Democracy* and *Mutual Autocracy*, which indicate whether the potential recognizer and the previous government are mutually democratic or mutually autocratic (Marshall and Jaggers 2010). Consistent with the literature, countries with Polity scores of +7 or greater were coded as democracies and those with scores of -7 or less were coded as autocracies. Both democracies and autocracies should be slow to recognize any new government that replaces an ideological friend.

In addition to recognition decisions being made to help ideologically similar countries, I also expect countries to help their economic allies. To indicate a friendly economic relationship I use the Design of Trade Agreements (DESTA) Database to identify pairs of countries that have signed preferential trade agreements (Dur, Baccini, and Elsig 2014). DESTA covers nearly 800 trade agreements from 1947-2010. I focus on bilateral agreements (BTA) as opposed to multi-party agreements or membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) specifically due to the fact that recognition is a bilateral decision and bilateral trade agreements more closely mirror that relationship.¹⁰ I use the variable *Bilateral Trade Agreement*, which is a

⁹The reference to dyad-years here is significant. After expanding the individual cases to account for all relevant potential recognizers, I then break each case-dyad into episodes by year. For instance, there was an extra-legal entry in Qatar on June 27, 1995. The United States conferred recognition on October 20, 1996. Thus, instead of having only one observation for the United States-Qatar dyad, I break it into two episodes one for 1995 and one for 1996. Had the United States never granted recognition, there would be an episode for each year until the Qatari regime left power. Breaking each dyad into such episodes allows me to include covariates that vary by year in my data analysis.

¹⁰I also tried to include various dyadic economic measures such as net trade flow, total trade flow, and trade flow as a percentage of joint GDP. The main problem involved missing data, specifically for many African countries and for Russia in many years. This forced the Cox model to omit a significant number

dichotomous variable and takes the value 1 in every year that an agreement is in force between a potential recognizer and a country experiencing an extra-legal entry. All other years are coded as 0. Like the ideological argument, the presence of a BTA should mean that a potential recognizer is less likely to recognize a new government.

The final hypothesis is the *Coordination Hypothesis*, and it eschews the enmity/amity paradigm and introduces another type of strategic thinking that countries might employ. Consistent with Coggins's and Duque's notion of international community with countries acting as the gatekeepers that wield the power to admit or deny new members, I also argue that countries have ardently defended the discretion that comes with that particular power in the face of suggestions about strict criteria that would make recognition a more objective process. In no small part this is because of the benefits that come with being "in the club." While recognition is a bilateral act, it is also true that recognition by one country alone does not equate to recognition by the community. That said, once one or more countries have recognized a new government it should be easier for others to do so as well. Employing the logic of a threshold or cascade model it should be true that as more countries recognize (i.e. legitimize) a new government that others should be more likely to recognize and to do so quickly. Moreover, it is possible for countries to coordinate their recognition decisions to help facilitate this process.

To test for this community behavior, I code the variable *Previous Recognition*, which is a count of the total number of recognizers in previous years. For instance, if there are five recognizers in a particular case and one country recognizes the new government in the first year, another recognizes the government in the second year, then *Previous Recognition* would be 0 in the first year, 1 in the second year, and 2 in the third year. The variable is obviously drawn from the data itself and ranges from 0-12 with an average number of previous recognitions just under 3. Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for all of my explanatory variables, as well as the control variables in each of the two datasets.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics – Independent Variables, 1995-2010

<i>Variable</i>	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Hostile	0.03	0.18	0	1
Bilat. Trade Agree.	0.01	0.1	0	1
Mutual Democracy	0.08	0.27	0	1
Mutual Autocracy	0.03	0.18	0	1
Previous Recognition	1.91	2.82	0	12
Colonial History	0.06	0.24	0	1
Oil Production	0.39	0.39	0	1
Instability	0.07	0.25	0	1

Control Variables. Given that this is the first large-N empirical study of the recognition of governments there is no extant literature that identifies control variables that need to be included in a model of recognition. That said, two sources do offer insight and guidance into the problem. The first is Coggins's (2011; 2014) work on the recognition of states emerging from secessionist conflicts, which is largely responsible for the theoretic underpinnings of this entire project. Coggins offers both domestic and international explanations of the decision to recognize new states, and I have already included appropriate variables in my model. The second source of potential controls is the literature on intervention into civil conflicts.

To this point I have largely avoided a discussion comparing recognition to intervention, as I do not want readers to think of recognition simply as another type of intervention. This is to take nothing away from an area of study that is hugely important and is continually expanding explanations related to that phenomenon. The fundamental distinction to note, though, is related to that phenomenon as compared to the decision of whether or not to recognize a new government. The opportunity for recognition, as I have previously described, arises when there has been a violation of domestic law that has immediate repercussions in the international community as the legal identity and status of a state's representation in that community is in question. Other countries must decide what legitimate authority will take on the responsibilities and obligations associated with that representation.

In the case of intervention, however, the choice being made by a country is whether to insert itself into an ongoing civil conflict. Often those conflicts have already inflicted great costs on the combatants and others in the conflict area and the additional costs associated with intervention are not insignificant. Economic, military, and human capital will have to be spent in furtherance of an intervention. Those same calculations do not necessarily apply to the decision to recognize a new government. While there are similarities between the decision to recognize and the decision to intervene in terms of a third party involving itself in another country's domestic affairs, the calculus underlying the two decisions is simply not the same.

of observations. Additionally, when those particular measures were included in the models they either violated the proportional hazard assumption or otherwise led to more model fit.

With that in mind I do use three variables that frequently appear in models of civil war intervention. The first is *Oil Production* and is included because both the intervention literature and the broader civil conflict literature identify importance of that resource in a variety of ways. Some studies have shown that resource-rich countries are more likely to experience civil conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003); other scholars make arguments regarding the possibility of extending conflicts or making an oil-rich state a likely target of intervention (Aydin 2010).¹¹ In truth, the mechanisms at play are still somewhat unsettled, but most scholars agree that it is important to control for the presence of oil.

As it relates to recognition, I think there are valid arguments that the presence of oil should make the time to recognition longer but that it could also make the time to recognition shorter. Potential recognizers reliant on oil might want to capitalize on a new government coming to power if the recognizer believes that the new government will be more amenable than the previous regime. Conversely, if a good relationship exists with the government that is being replaced, a potential recognizer may be hesitant to legitimize a new government. In short, I do not have any expectations as to the direction of the relationship that the presence of oil should have on the possibility of recognition. I code *Oil Production* as a dichotomous variable based on PETRODATA dataset (Lujala, Rod, and Theime 2007). That dataset provides information on oil production in particular countries and I code *Oil Production* 1 in the year that oil production begins and every year after and 0 if a country does not produce oil.¹²

I also control for colonial ties between the potential recognizer and the country that experienced an extra-legal change using the variable *Colonial History*. At the very least former colonial rulers should be more likely to take notice of an extra-legal change in a former colony, though it is not entirely clear how that status will affect their decision to recognize. Much like *Oil Production* arguments could be made that a shared colonial history should make recognition more likely or that it should make recognition less likely. Given that *Colonial History* is included as a control, that exact relationship is not the focus of the study. The variable is dichotomous, takes the value of 1 in every year in a dyad that has a colonial history, and is coded 0 otherwise.

Another factor that might influence a country's decision to recognize is domestic political instability. Kathman (2011) and others have written about the possibility of civil war contagion, and a similar logic should see countries with a tenuous grasp on power acting to quell unrest at home that might be fomented by an extra-legal change in another country. A country that is politically unstable should refuse, or at least delay, recognizing a new government for fear that it too might experience an extra-legal change. I include *Instability* as a dichotomous variable and code whether or not a country experienced a significant regime change in the year prior to an opportunity for recognition and 0 otherwise. I use Fearon and Laitin's (2003) operationalization of a three-or-greater change in Polity score to define a significant regime change.

Results and Analysis

Table 3 presents the regressions results of the Cox models on recognition decisions from 1995 – 2010. The signs to the right of the variable names indicate the expected direction of the relationship. To account for dependence within episodes I clustered the standard errors by dyad-id. Hazard ratios are presented, as their interpretation is more straightforward and more substantively meaningful than coefficients. A hazard ratio greater than one indicates an increased hazard—in this case the possibility of recognition. Meanwhile, a hazard ratio below one indicates a decreased possibility of recognition. Tests of the proportional hazard assumption indicate that the model does not violate the assumption and exhibits good fit on the whole.¹³ All diagnostics along with coefficient estimates for the models and hazard ratios and coefficient estimates for models without clustering are available from the author.

In general, the results provide strong evidence for two of the three hypotheses. The *Enmity Hypothesis* has the most support with statistical significance at the $p < 0.01$ level. Perhaps more important than the statistical interpretation, though, is the substantive interpretation. The presence of a hostile relationship with a prior regime increases the likelihood of recognition nearly three times. Put another way, the presence of a hostile relationship decreases the recognition time of a new government when it replaces a government that was unfriendly toward potential recognizers. Thus, the hypothesized mechanism of weakening one's enemies appears to be at work.

The *Coordination Hypothesis* also received strong support with statistical significance again at the $p < 0.01$ level. A greater number of previous recognizers increases the likelihood of (decreases the time to) recognition of a new government. Remember that for coordination the posited effect was something akin to a cascade. Like Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) argue with regard to the lifecycle of norms it could be that a tipping point exists for recognition—which is of course itself a social construct—and that the concerted efforts of other countries helps spur on the recognition process.

Interestingly there is virtually no support for the *Amity Hypothesis*. More troubling than simply the direction of the relationship is the significance of *Mutual Democracy* in both models, which indicates that when a potential recognizer and a

¹¹ Koubi et al. (2014) offers a nice overview of the studies that examine the role of natural resources in intrastate conflict.

¹² I chose this measure over others—such as a fuel exports as a percentage of GDP—due to missingness issues and model fit.

¹³ I would note that for the model presented here *Previous Recognition* is very nearly approaches statistical significance at the 0.1 level but that a visual inspection of the Schoenfeld residuals allay any fears regarding the proportional hazards assumption (Cleves et al. 2010).

Table 3. Determinants of Recognition of New Governments after Extra-Legal Change

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Hazard Ratio (1995-2010)</i>
Hostility (+)	2.849***
Bilateral Trade Agreement (-)	2.076
Mutual Democracy (-)	3.147***
Mutual Autocracy (-)	1.254
Previous Recognition (+)	1.272***
Colonial History (+/-)	1.771*
Oil Production (+/-)	1.495**
Instability (-)	1.157
Number of observations	964
Time at risk (days)	247,370
Number of failures	129
Number of subjects	352
Number of clusters	352

Notes: Hazard ratios are presented. The hazard ratio is the exponentiated form of the coefficient. All tests are two-tailed. Standard errors are clustered within each case by dyad-id and are presented with coefficient estimates in Appendix B. Significance at *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

previous regime are mutually democratic the likelihood of recognition of a new government—one that came to power in an extra-legal fashion—increases. This finding is particularly worrisome for proponents of the democratic legitimacy criteria as that theory holds that other countries, particularly democratic ones, should delay recognition or withhold it entirely from a government that came to power in a non-democratic fashion. This particular finding warrants further study in the future.

Consistent with the ideological findings it seems that the presence of a preferential trade agreement with a previous regime also has the effect of increasing the likelihood of recognizing a regime that comes to power in an extra-legal fashion, though not at a statistically significant level. Unlike the results for mutual ideology, there is perhaps a ready explanation for the trade finding. The assumption is that states act strategically to weaken their enemies and bolster their allies, which is another way of saying that countries act strategically to further their own self-interest. It is possible that in trade relations it is more important to maintain a stable relationship even if that means recognizing a government that replaced a friendly one. It undermines the notion of helping friends, but it is at least consistent with countries acting in their own best interests.

Finally, the control variables merit some discussion even though the expectations for them were less clear than the explanatory variables. Both *Colonial History* and *Oil Production* were statistically significant, and each increased the likelihood of recognition. Again, given the lack of agreement about the underlying mechanisms any justification of the findings would seem ad hoc at this point. Perhaps instead of fearing that recognition of other tenuous governments would make them appear domestically vulnerable countries believe that by recognizing new governments they themselves will become more legitimate in the international community. After all, recognition represents entry into the club and only those that are already members can provide access.

Conclusion

What determines why and when countries recognize governments that have come to power in an extra-legal fashion? Over the years, legal scholars and some policy makers have consistently bemoaned the lack of objective criteria to determine the legitimacy of such governments frustrated by the seeming political nature of recognition and its use by countries as a political tool. That frustration, however, offers an opportunity for political scientists to explain the behavior. The results presented here represent the first large-N empirical study that begins to untangle these particular questions and provide significant insight into what will hopefully become a more studied aspect of international relations.

It is hardly surprising that in general states act in a rational manner when it comes to recognition. That is, the complaint of legal scholars that recognition is too political should have indicated that countries used recognition to further their own interests. The novelty of this study, again aside from being the first empirical attempt to examine recognition of governments, is

that I attempt to explain the self-interested behavior of countries in terms of their relationships with the governments that lose power. It does appear that countries want to weaken opponents, as the presence of a hostile relationship between the potential recognizer and the previous government greatly increases the likelihood of recognition of a new government. This perhaps suggests that countries want to act quickly to ensure that a prior regime does not reclaim power.

On the other hand, amicable relations with a previous government stimulate rather than deter recognition when that government ousted extra-legally. The results surrounding mutual democracies are the most troubling and are most indicative of the need for future work. A beneficial economic relationship likewise did not have the expected effect on a recognition decision. Again, this perhaps suggest a more cynical approach to diplomacy that favors economic stability over helping a friend but that is conjecture at this point.

The social aspect of recognition is also an important consideration. Scholars have consistently advocated for an acknowledgment of the role that social constructs play in international relations, and some go so far as to argue that international society is itself a social construct. From this perspective recognition plays an important role as an institution that countries have worked over decades and centuries to develop and maintain and it serves as the fundamental mechanism for new actors to become members of that society. To that end, the role of coordination among potential recognizers cannot be ignored. Recognition can still be a strategic decision that countries make, but how the community views a new government matters as well.

As mentioned above, this study hopefully encourages other scholars to examine recognition. Questions about why mutual democracies act in the manner that they do abound and better data and different methods can always help answer new questions. Perhaps the most notable avenue for future research, though, is what happens after recognition. Whether or not newly recognized governments are more stable or survive longer than their counterparts are two immediate questions worthy of investigation. Likewise, the focus here has been on bilateral recognition, but the role of regional and international organizations warrant study. In short, this project should prove the starting point for many others going forward.

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