

Diplomatic Recognition in an Inter-dependent World:

Emerging Themes

"We can recognize anyone who owes us money."

with apologies to Woody Allen

I. Introduction:

This paper addresses the question of diplomatic recognition. In addition to examining the background to a traditional issue, with its attendant legal implications, it questions its usefulness as a concept at a time of growing inter-dependence and evolution in inter-state law and practice.

Among the key arguments developed in this paper are:

- the legal and political arguments surrounding the question of diplomatic recognition are ringing increasingly hollow; they no longer answer the requirements of a changing international system, especially as we move into a "post nation-state world";
- new concepts are being developed, responding to pragmatic necessities in an inter-dependent world, which have undermined much of the requirement for diplomatic recognition except as a symbolic gesture;
- although diplomatic recognition may not disappear from political radar screens as an issue, it needs to be de-emphasized, just as the pragmatic avenues open to diplomatic exchange need increased emphasis;
- we need a new vernacular when dealing with recognition issues, possibly linked to a more realistic "functionalism"; the black and white arguments of "recognition" or "non-recognition" are useless in an era where sovereignty and statehood may no longer be the key issues; the results make make for a more complex international environment, but one more solidly rooted in reality.

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