

# Review of: "Recognition Ambiguity! Kenya's Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Isreal, And Palestine Under Moi Era (1978-1990)"

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Below is my review of "Recognition Ambiguity! Kenya's Foreign Policy Towards Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Isreal, And Palestine Under Moi Era (1978-1990)." This paper lacks a coherent focus and while there may be an underlying argument, one must dig through the paper to find it. In addition, too little evidence is presented and there is not enough data to make either clear causal claims or draw substantive conclusions. This review will identify the paper's shortcomings and suggest ways in which it can be improved.

The paper lacks a coherent focus. It begins with an interesting vignette, includes a few general sentences describing different principles of recognition, and then delves into a 1.5-page biography of President Moi. It is unclear why the biography is needed or what it adds to the paper. It is only then that we get a brief 'Justification and Objective of the Study'. (Which, inexplicably, gets sidetracked into a brief section on U.S. President Jefferson.) However, this is not a proper introduction as it does not include a clear thesis statement, a conceptual/theoretical/case question to be explored, or a justification for why this study is important. The reader is left with the question of 'Why?': why is such a study important and what can/should it tell us about either Kenyan foreign policy or the norms of international recognition? Is Kenyan foreign policy under Moi an outlier in Africa or even an outlier in the history of Kenya? It is unclear what even someone particularly interested in Kenyan foreign policy would gain from this study, other than simply brief accounts of some recognition decisions. There seems to be a desire to frame these decisions as random, based upon the whims of Moi's personalistic decision-making process. This is actually a promising line of enquiry and could easily fit into a methodology of foreign policy analysis. However, nothing like this is followed through in the implementation of the study.

The paper also confuses state and government recognition throughout, drawing case studies from both without justification – and some of the two-brief cases (Afghanistan, Egypt, etc.) do not even deal with either state or government recognition. The paper seems to want to talk about Kenya's policy of government recognition, and thus tie it into the ongoing debate between the Estrada and Tobar doctrines as international law and norms, but ultimately does not do so in a substantive way.

It is also unclear why these cases were chosen do they tell us something important either about Kenya, international norms, or something else? They seem to have been chosen at random. The case which opens the paper (the decision to recognize the Amin government of Uganda) is an interesting one and could have made for an interesting case study, but

this is barely even mentioned elsewhere.

The data collection is also lacking. There are some Kenyan articles cited throughout, but in order to make a strong contribution to either Kenyan foreign policy studies or to further our understanding of shifting international norms of recognition, a study like this needed far more and more detailed information, including possibly archival research and/or a more concrete interview plan. Consequently, the case studies lack any depth and rather are far too general. The methodology, strangely, is toward the end and tells us very little.

Finally, this paper needs a serious proofreading. The fact that there is a spelling mistake in the title is telling.

In short, this paper needs a lot of work. Here are some suggestions. Clearly articulate what the paper is meant to achieve, why it is important, and what contribution it makes other than simply a summary of some recognition decisions – i.e., connect the paper to larger issues or debates either in terms of Kenyan foreign policy decision-making or the development of international norms of recognition. Justify why these case studies were chosen and what can they tell us about Kenyan decision-making or the development of international norms of recognition. Make a stronger distinction between state and government recognition and follow through with this in the paper. Engage in some serious data collection. If one wants to make a case about the nature of foreign policy decision-making under Moi, one needs to delve deeply into the details. The idea that Moi's foreign policy decision-making was personalistic in nature – and this contrasts with policy before and afterward – is interesting if actually true, as the paper hints at. There may be a story to be told here, but this paper needs to tell it better.