Bottom-up Change in Frozen Conflicts: Transnational Struggles and Mechanisms of Recognition in Western Sahara

Author

Irene Fernández-Molina
Department of Politics, University of Exeter
Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Streatham Campus, EX4 4RJ Exeter, United Kingdom
I.F.Molina@exeter.ac.uk

Biography

Irene Fernández-Molina is Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Exeter. Her research deals with international relations of the Global South, subalternity and southern agency, foreign policies of dependent and/or authoritarian states, conflicts, international socialisation and recognition, with a regional focus on North Africa, as well as EU foreign policy and Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Abstract

This article proposes a typology of causal mechanisms whereby transnational relations of recognition constitute conflict actors in frozen conflicts. While the agency of an emerging conflict actor manifests itself in 'struggles for recognition' motivated by experiences of 'disrespect', responses from different significant others vary in terms of motivations and pathways (mechanisms of recognition). Adapting Honneth's tripartite division, the typology distinguishes between four forms of recognition; thin cognitive recognition, 'respect'/rights, 'esteem'/difference and 'love'/empathy. Three transnational corrections are made in order to include transnational relations of recognition, non-state actors and unstructured social-relational forms of international/transnational recognition. The typology is applied to the conflict of Western Sahara, which has been reshaped by the rise of internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups (based inside the territory annexed by Morocco) as an increasingly relevant conflict actor, with their identity shifting from victims to human rights activists to activists involved in an unsolved conflict. This identity and social-status formation has been the product of transnational recognition from three significant others, i.e. the annexing state (Morocco), the contested state-in-exile (SADR) and the international community. The overall effect of intermingling recognition processes, including various instrumental initiatives deprived of mutuality, has been increased struggle and conflict complexity rather than 'recognitional peace'.

Key words

Recognition theory, frozen conflicts, transnationalism, causal mechanisms, Western Sahara

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1. Introduction

'Frozen conflict' is often more of an enticing metaphor than a streamlined analytical concept. Frozen conflicts have been defined as conflict situations where 'the violence stopped, but the underlying interests of the formerly warring parties have neither been abated nor addressed'.[1] 'Contested states'[2] with limited international recognition but unwilling to relinquish their sovereignty aspirations are frequently part of the stalemate equation. Yet, the pressing of the pause button implied by the adjective 'frozen' raises eyebrows. If there is any consensus in the meagre scholarship on this topic, it is that frozen conflicts are seldom such. Smetana and Ludvík distinguish between three types of dynamics: peaceful thawing, violent thawing and conflict withering. Among the causes of these changes, they tentatively point to third party involvement, including that of the contested state's 'patron state', the practices of the 'international conflict resolution apparatus' and the shifting interests of various domestic actors.[3] The list is not meant to be exhaustive and leaves out significant yet understudied internal dynamics,[4] including bottom-up alterations in the inner player/party structure of a frozen conflict that may be driven by the emergence of a new conflict actor. Such is the focus of this article, where I will argue that, in these dynamics, 'what counts as a relevant actor, and how these actors acquire their status or standing'[5] is essentially a product of recognition.

[1] Valery Perry, 'At Cross Purposes? Democratization and Peace Implementation Strategies in Bosnia and Herzegovina's Frozen Conflict', *Human Rights Review*, 10:1 (2009), p. 36.
[2] Deon Geldenhuys, *Contested States in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[3] Michal Smetana and Jan Ludvík, 'Between War and Peace: A Dynamic Reconceptualization of "Frozen Conflicts"', *Asia Europe Journal*, online first (2018), pp. 9-11.
[4] Magdalena Dembinska and Aurélie Campana, 'Frozen Conflicts and Internal Dynamics of De Facto States: Perspectives and Directions for Research', *International Studies Review*, 19:2 (2017), pp. 254-278.
[5] Jens Bartelson, 'Three Concepts of Recognition', *International Theory*, 5:1 (2013), p. 111.

Defined as the intersubjective relation required for the 'formation of the practical self'[6] and, by extension, 'a social act' whereby 'another actor […] is constituted as a subject with a legitimate social standing',[7] recognition presupposes a dynamic interaction between the agency, or 'struggle', of a given actor and responses from one or various 'significant others'. The former's identity formation and social status inherently depend on the latter's feedback. Then, how can the workings of recognition constitute actorness and thereby become a force for change within the context of a frozen conflict? What are the causal mechanisms involved on both sides of the developing self-other relationship(s) and how do they play out?

The conflict over Western Sahara in northwest Africa pitting Morocco against the pro-independence Polisario Front – plus its conjoined contested state-in-exile, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) – is one of those stuck in the kind of protracted 'no war, no peace' situation described by the frozen conflict literature. Large-scale violence or open warfare has been absent for nearly three decades, and thus it no longer qualifies as a war or armed conflict in databases such as the UCDP/PRIO one or Correlates of War. However, no proper peace settlement has yet been reached, and 'the basic incompatibility between the parties – the status of the territory of Western Sahara – remains unresolved'.[8] Western Sahara therefore helps us to envisage a universal, not-region-specific definition of frozen conflict, stripped of the post-Soviet bias with which the concept originally became associated in the 1990s. Furthermore, this is a particularly intriguing case for addressing the problem of change in frozen conflicts. Over the last two decades, while

[6] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), p. 68.
[7] Alexander Wendt, 'Why a World State is Inevitable', *European Journal of International Relations*, 9:4 (2003), p. 511.
[8] See http://ucdp.uu.se/#/statebased/721.

failing to 'transform' in the resolution-oriented sense that the conflict literature usually attributes to such term, Western Sahara has undergone a gradual yet substantial 'spatial and scalar shift'. Through a sort of 'inward turn',[9] the conflict's political centre of gravity and *struggle* has returned from an extraterritorial exile locus to the interior of the disputed land where it originated in the mid-1970s, mostly occupied and annexed since that time by Morocco. I have argued that such structural move has been driven by the emergence and constitution of a new (in this case non-state) conflict actor; namely, internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups based within the disputed territory. This, in turn, has necessitated cross-border, transnational recognition from three significant others – the Moroccan state, the Polisario Front/SADR and the international community.[10] Without such recognition, internal Sahrawi nationalists would not count today as a relevant conflict actor. Yet, how have these struggles for recognition and responses to them specifically operated? And what has been their impact on the constitution of the new conflict actor?

This article addresses the empirical puzzle of the emergence of a new non-state conflict actor in Western Sahara owing to, and by means of, transnational recognition dynamics. Based on this case study, it takes a step towards middle-range theorising by building a typology of the causal mechanisms whereby transnational relations of recognition constitute – i.e. shape the collective identity formation and social status of – conflict actors in frozen conflicts. With 'its unique capacity to meaningfully engage with socio-spatial relations at both local and global levels through which people construct their

[9] Irene Fernández-Molina, 'Towards a Multilevel Analysis of the Western Sahara Conflict and the Effects of its Protractedness', in Raquel Ojeda-García, Irene Fernández-Molina and Victoria Veguilla (eds) *Global, Regional and Local Dimensions of Western Sahara's Protracted Decolonization: When a Conflict Gets Old* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017a), pp. 10-12.
[10] Irene Fernández-Molina, 'Protests under Occupation: The Spring inside Western Sahara', *Mediterranean Politics*, 20:2 (2015), pp. 235-254.

identity',[11] recognition theory provides a distinct angle for examining the transnational dimension of conflicts[12] in primarily social terms, looking at the role of non-material factors whose causal operation cannot be reduced to rational choice. The explanatory lens of causal mechanisms places the attention on 'the pathways or proces*ses* by which an effect is produced or a purpose is accomplished'.[13] This has been advocated as an avenue for cumulative middle-range theoretical progress in International Relations (IR), typically in the form of causal mechanism typologies.[14]

In this respect, the two-sided nature of recognition relations implies the operation of two causal mechanisms in parallel. On one hand, the agency of the emerging conflict actor manifests itself in a series of 'struggles for recognition'. According to Honneth's theory, the causal mechanism at work here is quite straightforward and universal. It is always the painful experience of denial of recognition or 'disrespect' that motivates a subject to engage in this sort of moral struggle, 'for it is only by regaining the possibility of active conduct that individuals can dispel the state of emotional tension into which they are forced as a result of humiliation'.[15] What is less homogeneous are the motivations and pathways for significant others to respond to the new actor's struggle in one way or another. This is what the typology in this article seeks to capture as 'mechanisms of recognition'.

[11] Shannon Brincat, 'Cosmopolitan Recognition: Three Vignettes', *International Theory*, 9:1 (2017), p. 3.
[12] Jeffrey T. Checkel (ed.), *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[13] John Gerring, 'The Mechanismic Worldview: Thinking inside the Box', *British Journal of Political Science*, 38:1 (2008), p. 178, plural added.
[14] Andrew Bennett, 'The Mother of All Isms: Causal Mechanisms and Structured Pluralism in International Relations Theory', *European Journal of International Relations*, 19:3 (2013), pp. 459-481.
[15] Honneth (1995) p. 138.

The remainder of the article proceeds in four steps. First, a review is made of the journey of recognition theory from Hegelian philosophy through critical theory to IR and peacebuilding, identifying also the biases and blind spots of each of these strands. Second, building on Honneth's tripartite division of forms of recognition ('love', 'respect', 'esteem'),[16] the theoretical foundations are laid for a typology of causal mechanisms of transnational recognition involved in the constitution of conflict actors in frozen conflicts. This requires examining the challenges of empirically operationalising and adapting Honneth's 'social theory with normative content', as well as making three *transnational corrections* with the aim of including transnational relations of recognition, recognition struggles of non-state actors, and unstructured social and relational forms of international/transnational recognition. Third, the effects of frozen conflict on transnational recognition dynamics are considered with specific reference to the case of Western Sahara. Finally, inductive insights from this case study are incorporated in order to substantiate the typology of mechanisms of recognition, which combines the two dimensions along which responses to the internal Sahrawi nationalists' struggles may vary, i.e. *significant others* and *forms of recognition*.

2. The journey of recognition from philosophy to IR and peacebuilding

'Everyone cares about recognition'.[17] Recognition theory as we know it today emerged in the 1990s in an attempt to underscore how pervasive and constitutive relations of recognition are throughout social and political life. The shared philosophical ancestor for all of its proponents was Hegel, the author of the concept of the 'struggle for recognition'. This was developed in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*'s famous master-servant dialectic –

[16] Ibid. pp. 92-130.
[17] Cillian McBride, *Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), p. 1.

where two self-consciousnesses engage in a struggle to be recognised as such by one another, illustrating how freedom is necessarily realised in social interactions, or intersubjectively mediated[18] – as well as in earlier writings preceding his metaphysical turn. Honneth was actually much keener on the latter for their emphasis on the 'original intersubjectivity of human life' and the 'interpenetration of socialisation and individuation' on all levels – psychological, sociological, legal, political – and not just for the formation of self-consciousness.[19] All in all, Hegel's core idea that the constitution of a subject's self-identity depends on the encounter with, and acknowledgement by, other autonomous subjects would stay as a powerful challenger of the atomistic assumptions about the individual-society relationship that characterise mainstream modern social philosophy.[20]

The Hegelian relational ontology was brought back to the forefront in social theory and the social sciences in the early 1990s by two parallel currents of what would become known as recognition theory.[21] On one hand, a continental philosophical approach rooted in the Frankfurt School critical theory tradition, represented by Honneth,[22] put forward a comprehensive 'social theory with normative content' based on the premise that there is one underlying 'moral grammar' that is common to all social struggles. According to Honneth, the three components of any individual's self-determination are self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, which in turn rely on the social recognition provided by others in the form of 'love', 'rights' and 'solidarity', respectively. The

[18] See Michael Theunissen, 'The Repressed Intersubjectivity in Hegel's Philosophy of Right', in Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson (eds) *Hegel and Legal Theory* (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 3-63.
[19] Honneth (1995) pp. 29, 16, 62-63.
[20] Ibid. pp. 3-30.
[21] McBride (2013) pp. 2-3.
[22] Honneth (1995).

disrespect experienced when any of these is denied triggers struggles for recognition which act as a 'productive force for change'.[23] On the other hand, an Anglo-American strand led by Taylor[24] developed the notion of the 'politics of recognition' in relation to multiculturalism and the politics of identity, as a critique of universalistic rights-based approaches to these issues. This latter strand became a lively breeding ground for scholarship on the struggles of all kinds of subaltern social groups and minorities suffering from *mis*recognition, the so-called 'new social movements' and the 'politics of difference'.

The critical theory and 'politics of recognition' approaches share a number of common traits. First, in terms of level of analysis, they both extrapolate the Hegelian mechanisms of recognition from the (inter)personal psychological domain by assigning collective agency – the capability to be subject and object of recognition – to larger social groups. Honneth particularly stresses the 'I in we', or 'recognition as a driving force of group formation'.[25] For him, the transposition of (mis)recognition from the individual to the collective level works as a 'practical process in which individual experiences of disrespect are read as typical for an entire group, and in such a way that they can motivate collective demands for expanded relations of recognition'.[26] Second, the two approaches similarly embrace the 'recognition deficit' model[27] in warning of the damaging effects of the lack of recognition or disrespect, and assuming that more recognition would be the logical remedy. This normative stance presupposes an optimistic belief in the emancipatory

[23] Ibid. p. 49.
[24] Charles Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann (eds), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 25-73.
[25] Axel Honneth, *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), pp. 201-216.
[26] Honneth (1995) p. 162.
[27] McBride (2013) p. 6.

potential of mutual recognition which contrasts with pessimistic views such those of Kojève, Sartre[28] and Fanon. Fanon[29] applied Hegel's master-servant dialectic to the colonial encounter ('white master' vs. 'black slave') in order to highlight its inherent logic of violent appropriation and thus the 'perpetual, antagonistic struggle of mutual objectification'.[30] Third, both approaches propose similar tripartite distinctions of the forms of recognition, as Honneth's 'rights', 'solidarity' and 'love' largely correspond to Taylor's 'politics of universalism', 'politics of difference' and recognition in intimate contexts of loving care.[31]

Another prevailing feature of the recognition scholarship stemming from these two accounts, including most of their empirical applications, has been the domestic bias entailed by a primary focus on struggles for recognition '*within* national states and societies'.[32] This analytical restriction does not appear to be intrinsic to the Hegelian model or its subsequent theoretical developments, but is rather a matter of methodological nationalism. Persuaded of the need to overcome it, a group of scholars within the constructivist school of IR have more recently endeavoured to introduce recognition into this discipline, making it a core element of sociological and identity-based views of world politics.[33] Their starting premise is that the same recognition needs and misrecognition grievances that shape the identity formation and social status of individuals and groups also apply, at a larger scale, to the behaviour of international actors – chiefly states –

[28] See Honneth (1995) pp. 58, 156-157.
[29] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1952/2008).
[30] Andrew Schaap, 'Political Reconciliation through a Struggle for Recognition?', *Social and Legal Studies*, 13:4 (2004), pp. 530-533.
[31] Taylor (1994) pp. 37-38.
[32] Christopher Daase, Caroline Fehl, Anna Geis, and Georgios Kolliarakis (eds.) (2015) *Recognition in International Relations: Rethinking a Political Concept in a Global Context* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 3-4. Shannon Brincat, 'Recognition, Conflict and the Problem of Ethical Community', *Global Discourse*, 4:4 (2014), p. 397.
[33] Erik Ringmar, 'Introduction: The International Politics of Recognition', in Thomas Lindemann and Erik Ringmar (eds) *The International Politics of Recognition* (Boulder/London: Paradigm, 2012), pp. 3-4.

within the social system that is world politics. Besides the issue of corporate agency, this involves an ontological move to anthropomorphise the state by attributing to it human qualities and subjectivity, whose problematic aspects have been widely discussed in the literature.[34] On the other hand, bringing recognition theory into IR generates an intriguing crossover with the evergreen debates on the formal recognition of statehood in international law – where the subjectivity of the state and the social procedures that constitute it are not just a metaphor, but a well-established, codified and institutionalised set of rules and practices.[35]

IR scholarship on recognition is still in its infancy and in the process of breaking some unwarranted moulds. In empirical terms, (mis)recognition as a driver for state behaviour in world politics has been mostly applied to the study of the causes of inter-state war[36] and grievances about disrespect by 'prickly states',[37] including the latter's impact on hostile bilateral relationships.[38] It thus focuses predominantly on the negative side of the coin. As a counterpoint, the most unabashed optimist in this discipline has been Wendt, who used Hegel's dialectic and the divide-overcoming view of struggles for recognition to argue that the system of states would be *inevitably* transforming into a single world state.[39] An alternative, more empirically grounded emancipatory proposal for progressing towards cosmopolitanism through recognition has been advanced by Brincat.[40] On the other hand, another prevailing bias affecting even Wendt's cosmopolitan teleology is the

[34] On the state personhood debate or 'transfer issue', see e.g. Mattias Iser, 'Recognition between States? Moving beyond Identity Politics', in Daase et al. (2015), pp. 27-45.
[35] Axel Honneth, 'Recognition between States: On the Moral Substrate of International Relations', in Lindemann and Ringmar (2012), pp. 27-28.
[36] Thomas Lindemann, *Causes of War: The Struggle for Recognition* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2010).
[37] Reinhard Wolf, 'Prickly States? Recognition and Disrespect between Persons and Peoples', in Lindemann and Ringmar (2012), pp. 39-56.
[38] Constance Duncombe, 'Representation, Recognition and Foreign Policy in the Iran-US Relationship', *European Journal of International Relations*, 22:3 (2016), pp. 622-645.
[39] Wendt (2003).
[40] Brincat (2017).

state-centric tendency to consider the nation-state as the primary subject and object of recognition in world politics, neglecting non-state actors and 'recognition processes between different individuals and groups *across*, *between* and *over* the state',[41] i.e. transnational recognition.

By contrast, the recognition of non-state (conflict) actors has been a central concern for the peacebuilding literature. This typically underscores the role of 'thick recognition' in the transformation of intractable identity-based conflicts, as well as in post-conflict reconciliation and the construction of a just peace from a normative standpoint.[42] Viewed as necessary conditions for these progressive long-term changes to take place, both 'thin recognition' – the acceptance and acknowledgement of the existence of the other as an autonomous agent – and 'thick recognition' – the understanding of the other 'in terms of the essential elements composing its identity' – likewise apply to 'parties, states, peoples, or other such collectives'.[43] These kinds of identity reconstruction processes have been empirically studied in mostly frozen conflict contexts such as Northern Ireland,[44] their Western Balkans[45] and Israel-Palestine.[46] In focusing on inter-community relations, the analysis has a primarily domestic focus. In addition, the normative stress on the possibility of identity change and the erosion of difference enabled by recognition[47] leads to recognition dynamics being almost uniformly portrayed as positive and constructive.

[41] Brincat (2014) p. 398. Brincat (2017) p. 3-4.
[42] Pierre Allan and Alexis Keller, 'Is a Just Peace Possible without Thin and Thick Recognition?', in Lindemann and Ringmar (2012), pp. 71-84. Karin Aggestam and Annika Björkdahl (eds), *Rethinking Peacebuilding: The Quest for Just Peace in the Middle East and the Western Balkans* (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2013).
[43] Allan and Keller (2012) pp. 76-77.
[44] See Shane O'Neill and Nicholas H. Smith (eds), *Recognition Theory as Social Research: Investigating the Dynamics of Social Conflict* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
[45] Aggestam and Björkdahl (2013).
[46] Lisa Strömbom, 'Thick Recognition: Advancing Theory on Identity Change in Intractable Conflicts', *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:1 (2014), pp. 168-191.
[47] Allan and Keller (2012) pp. 77-78.

There is little consideration for their potentially dual, counterproductive or 'normatively undesirable' effects[48] in conflict contexts, including the role that incomplete or flawed forms of recognition might play in deepening the differences between the self and the other.[49] Rather than a hidden 'dark side', the (re)generation of the struggle for recognition when mutuality is not achieved is actually intrinsic to the theory.[50]

3. Towards a typology of causal mechanisms of transnational recognition in frozen conflicts

In short, a few exceptions aside, the existing IR scholarship on recognition tends to look at the negative side of the coin and remains largely state-centric, neglecting the struggles for recognition of non-state actors beyond the state framework. Conversely, much of the peacebuilding literature optimistically understates the unintended consequences of – and the political conflict that is intrinsic to – the mutual recognition it prescribes, and is empirically weighed down by its primarily domestic focus. Due to their respective limitations, this article argues that none of these perspectives is capable of capturing the full extent and complexity of the role played by recognition in frozen conflicts. Instead, the causal mechanisms at work are better understood as *transnational recognition processes producing contingent effects*. Insights from the scholarship on transnationalism provide a necessary corrective to some of the aforementioned blind spots.

This section lays the theoretical foundations for a typology of the causal mechanisms of transnational recognition involved in the constitution of conflict actors in frozen conflicts

[48] Daase et al. (2015) p. 6.
[49] Brian Greenhill, 'Recognition and Collective Identity Formation in International Politics', *European Journal of International Relations*, 14:2 (2008), p. 352.
[50] Point raised by anonymous reviewer.

– the deductive element which will be later confronted with inductive insights from the empirical case study. It proceeds in two steps: discussing the theoretical challenges of adapting Honneth's theory for this purpose and making three additional *transnational corrections*. Assuming that an experience of disrespect and a struggle for recognition are always present on the part of any new conflict actor, the mechanisms of recognition included in the typology correspond to the significant others' responses to it. These may vary along two dimensions: *significant others* and *forms of recognition*. The potential range of significant others for a newcomer in a frozen conflict context typically includes a mix of state, inter-state, non-state and in-between 'liminal'[51] actors: the 'de facto',[52] 'unrecognised'[53] or 'contested state'[54] lying at the heart of the dispute, the 'parent state' from which it aims to secede – or 'annexing state' in non-secessionist cases such as Western Sahara –, the 'patron state' on which it relies for its political and economic survival, non-state actors associated with any of the aforementioned states or properly transnational in nature, other foreign states, and regional and international organisations.[55]

As far as forms of recognition are concerned, my typology follows the classical tripartite division made by Honneth,[56] yet adding an extra, non-normative cognitive layer as suggested by Ringmar.[57] Building on Hegel and Mead, Honneth's first form of recognition is the 'love' given to individuals in the context of primary social relationships

[51] Maria Mälksoo, 'The Challenge of Liminality for International Relations Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 38:2 (2012), pp. 481-494.
[52] Scott Pegg, *International Society and the de Facto State* (Farnham: Ashgate, 1998).
[53] Nina Caspersen and Gareth Stansfield (eds), *Unrecognized States in the International System* (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2011).
[54] Geldenhuys (2009).
[55] Nina Caspersen, 'Playing the Recognition Game: External Actors and De Facto States', *The International Spectator*, 44:4 (2009), pp. 47-60.
[56] Honneth (1995) pp. 92-130.
[57] Ringmar (2012) p. 7.

(parent-child, family, friendship and love affairs) which cover their most basic physical and emotional security necessities as 'needy creatures'.[58] While naturally belonging to small circles, there is room to generalise 'love' to forms of affection, empathy and affiliation provided at the collective level, as long as they involve or support close human contact and care.[59] Secondly, recognition as 'respect' or 'rights' refers to a relationship whereby 'ego and alter mutually recognise each other as legal persons, in that they share a knowledge of those norms by which their particular community superintends the rights and responsibilities which they are equally entitled'.[60] This corresponds to the modern liberal idea of universal human rights assigning equal status and dignity to all people, as well as to Taylor's 'politics of universalism'. Thirdly, recognition as 'esteem' or 'solidarity' is directed 'at the particular qualities that characterise people in their personal difference' as individuals.[61] Extrapolated to larger identity-based social groups such as gender, ethnic, religious and cultural minority communities, this recognition of particularity underpins Taylor's 'politics of difference'.

Adapting this triad for the purpose of a typology of mechanisms of transnational recognition in frozen conflicts poses three important theoretical challenges. The first of them is that of empirically operationalising a theory with normative foundations as deep as Honneth's, which is anchored in the belief in the emancipatory potential of mutual recognition or, absent this, struggles therefor. Against the normative ideal of mutuality, real-world recognition relations often appear to be 'only partial, one-sided, and thereby not only radically incomplete but a form of misrecognition'.[62] Honneth himself admits

[58] Honneth (1995) p. 95. Axel Honneth, 'Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition', *Political Theory*, 20:2 (1992), p. 193.
[59] See Brincat (2017) pp. 14-15.
[60] Honneth (1992) p. 194.
[61] Honneth (1995) p. 122.
[62] Brincat (2014) p. 400.

that many empirical situations never attain such ideal and 'not all struggles for recognition necessarily lead to moral progress'.[63] Faced with this dilemma, the typology opts for operationalising mechanisms of recognition in a looser, non-normative fashion, so as to not exclude from the start behaviour driven by strategic/instrumental rationality and material interest and/or occurring 'within asymmetric power relations'.[64] As will be shown below in the case study, this does not preclude awareness of the normatively flawed nature of such recognition dynamics, which may explain their contingent outcomes or 'dark side'. The second challenge concerns the transfer of Honneth's three forms of recognition into the domain of IR, which he himself has said he is unconvinced about, for 'unlike social groups or movements […] national collectives are far too amorphous for us to be able to make comparable differentiations'.[65] However, such scepticism manifestly refers to inter-state international relations. Various authors have deemed it unwarranted[66] especially when it comes to transnational recognition of non-state actors,[67] like the one addressed in this article.

The third challenge and admitted departure from Honneth's core theory lies in adding to his triad a fourth, non-normative form of recognition, i.e. the most elementary cognitive acknowledgement of the existence and autonomy of a subject by others. This understanding of being 'recognised in the sense of being noticed'[68] is somehow found in translation, as the German language has two different words for (re)cognition in the epistemic sense (*Wiedererkennung*) and the practical status-granting sense

[63] Jürgen Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School and International Relations: On the Centrality of Recognition', *Review of International Studies*, 31:1 (2005), p. 189.
[64] Daase et al. (2015) pp. 5-6, 15-16.
[65] Honneth (2012) pp. 32-33.
[66] Michelle Murray, 'Differentiating Recognition in International Politics', *Global Discourse*, 4:4 (2014), p. 558. Haacke (2005) p. 193.
[67] Brincat (2017) p. 12.
[68] Ringmar (2012) p. 7.

(*Anerkennung*).[69] Honneth has more recently discussed acts whereby an actor 'takes note of, or cognises, an empirical reality', yet making it clear that 'this type of recognition […] is not normative but instead expresses […] cognition of a given state of affairs' – 'cognition rather than re-cognition'.[70] He has also supported the non-normative vs. normative distinction along the lines of the 'thin' vs. 'thick' recognition introduced by Wendt[71] and later developed in the peacebuilding literature (see above),[72] with only 'thick recognition' being liable to being broken down into his 'love', 'respect' and 'esteem'.[73] Therefore, incorporating 'thin' or 'minimal' recognition[74] into the typology advanced here makes sense as long as their distinct non-normative nature is taken into consideration.[75]

As a second step, in order to discern the significant others and causal mechanisms that are contextually fit for frozen conflict conditions, this taxonomy needs to be accompanied by three transnational corrections. The scholarship on transnationalism[76] puts forward three core analytical commitments: crossing borders – not only substantive state boundaries but also the intellectual ones posed by levels of analysis in IR –, paying due attention to non-state actors, and prioritising process over stasis. This is exactly what the typology proposed here requires in order to bring to the fore three realities, overcoming the artificial dichotomies that obscure them. The first of them is the importance of transnational relations of recognition cutting across state boundaries and the domestic vs.

[69] See translator's note in Honneth (1995) p. viii.
[70] Honneth (2012) p. 28.
[71] Wendt (2003) pp. 511-512.
[72] Allan and Keller (2012). Strömbom (2014).
[73] Axel Honneth, 'Rejoinder', *Global Discourse*, 4:4 (2014), p. 564.
[74] Lindemann (2010) p. 25.
[75] Besides Ringmar's, another fourfold distinction of types of international recognition can be found in Iser (2015) pp. 36-40.
[76] See Thomas Risse-Kappen (ed.), *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions* (Ithaca, NY/London: Cornell University Press, 1995).

international divide. The added value of transnationalism lies in embracing an 'open polity perspective', '[moving] well beyond level-of-analysis approaches […] to emphasise cross-level interactions that put the spotlight on process'.[77] As argued above, Honneth's recognition theory and typology seem to work far better in IR when extrapolated to transnational relations than in the purely inter-state realm. Some of his followers have rightly pointed out that '[…] there is nothing in Honneth's version of recognition theory […] which precludes the possibility of struggles for recognition expanding any given cultural horizon across the boundaries of political, ethnic, or religious communities'.[78]

The second transnational correction aims to overcome the gulf between analyses of state and non-state actors, acknowledging the struggles for international/transnational recognition of the latter. Underscoring the role of non-state actors in world politics has been a constant concern for the literature on transnationalism since the 1970s, while the focus has shifted from economic actors to the transnational non-profit sector, and radical anti-state-centric ambitions have been abandoned to deal instead with the interactions between state and non-state actors.[79] Both of these trends are relevant to the analysis of recognition mechanisms in frozen conflicts, where non-state actors tend to belong to the category of civil society or social movements, being immersed in contentious transnational politics, and seek recognition by engaging with significant others of both state and non-state nature. Moreover, not only do non-state actors care about

[77] Checkel (2013) pp. 5, 8.
[78] Volker Heins, 'The Global Politics of Recognition', in Shane O'Neill and Nicholas H. Smith (eds) *Recognition Theory as Social Research: Investigating the Dynamics of Social Conflict* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 213. See also Brincat (2017). Dieter Gosewinkel and Dieter Rucht (eds), *Transnational Struggles for Recognition: New Perspectives on Civil Society since the Twentieth Century* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017).
[79] Thomas Risse, 'Transnational Actors and World Politics', in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons (eds) *Handbook of International Relations* (2nd ed) (Los Angeles/London: SAGE, 2013), p. 430.

international/transnational recognition as much or more than states, but also, in the context of frozen conflicts, a number of significant recognition relations occur in the grey zones populated by liminal international actors that are 'betwixt and between' these two categories, as is the case with contested states.

The third dichotomy in need of a transnational correction concerns the conventional dualistic view of recognition in international law – either an actor (i.e. a state) is recognised or it is not. Based on a sociological view of world politics informed by recognition theory, there exist unstructured, social and relational forms of international/transnational recognition that are analytically distinct from the legal black-and-white terms.[80] Transnational social recognition results instead from an actor's practical accumulation of transnational engagements and interactions, without necessarily ever crossing, or implying the existence of, a specific threshold or benchmark. From this perspective, and relatedly to the previous point, the recognition needs and aspirations of state and non-state actors do not appear to be dramatically different. When it comes to international policy responses to their various struggles, a long continuum exists that 'runs from highly formalised to extremely informal modes of recognition, and from the recognition of non-state actors and other political collectives as legitimate negotiating partners to the recognition of entities as sovereign states and as states with specific entitlements'.[81]

[80] Dimitris Bouris and Irene Fernández-Molina, 'Contested States, Hybrid Diplomatic Practices and the Everyday Quest for Recognition', *International Political Sociology*, 12:3 (2018), pp. 306-324.
[81] Daase et al. (2015) p. 16.

4. Recognition dynamics in frozen conflicts and the case of Western Sahara

Now, besides the range of actors involved, the context of frozen conflict itself has some specific effects on transnational recognition dynamics, as this section endeavours to show with reference to the case of Western Sahara. First, although the basic incompatibility between the parties remains unresolved, the absence of large-scale violence allows for a relative institutional stability and avenues for non-coercive political change. Whereas military means arguably 'undermine the very (normative) basis' of any recognition order,[82] conflict freezing enables new engagements and relations of recognition between multiple conflict actors to flourish, whether driven by instrumental rationality or involving proper mutuality. In the case of Western Sahara, the conflict originated in 1975-1976 as a result of neighbouring state(s)' occupation and annexation of the colonial territory of the Spanish Sahara in the context of a thwarted decolonisation process. In its first incarnation, this unfolded as a 15-year open armed confrontation pitting the Polisario Front – the Sahrawi national liberation movement based in the Tindouf refugee camps in southwestern Algeria, where half of the indigenous Sahrawi population fled – against Morocco and Mauritania. The internationally recognised conflict parties were soon reduced to two, i.e. Morocco vs. the Polisario Front, following Mauritania's withdrawal in 1979. The intensity of armed combat, compounded with the utter isolation of the Moroccan-annexed Western Sahara, prevented the Sahrawis who stayed there from engaging in meaningful and stable recognition relationships. Even at the level of 'love', for years these internal Sahrawis were virtually cut off from their families in exile. It was not until the conflict froze following the 1991 UN-sponsored ceasefire and Settlement Plan, accepted by both parties, that the internal Sahrawi struggles for recognition began

[82] Iser (2015) p. 43.

to emerge. These would turn out to be the most significant frozen conflict dynamic in subsequent years, as the implementation of the self-determination referendum for the Sahrawi people provided for by the UN Settlement Plan stalled due to the parties' insuperable disagreement about the electorate entitled to vote.

The second effect of frozen conflict on transnational recognition dynamics relates to the particular susceptibility of contested states to the latter. As Voller has argued, the persistent 'crisis of legitimacy' that results from their limited to no international recognition in the conventional legal sense tends to make contested states hyperactive in their communicative (inter)action with the international community, and therefore more vulnerable to external 'standards of recognition and legitimacy'.[83] On the other hand, wary of 'creeping recognition' being inferred from their dealings with contested states, international actors often resort to diplomatic practices of what they see as 'engagement without recognition'[84]. Both of these trends may be seen as consequences of the (relative) comeback, in the post-Cold War era, of the 'constitutive theory' of statehood in international law, which emphasises criteria of legitimacy, 'earned sovereignty' and collective endorsement/recognition by other states, after centuries of predominance of the modern 'declaratory theory', which prioritises purely functional/effectiveness features such as the Montevideo Convention criteria.[85] In the case of Western Sahara this applies to the SADR, which interestingly, as a primarily extraterritorial state-in-exile lacking control over (most of) the territory it claims, does better in terms of constitutive statehood than declaratory statehood. The SADR's struggle for recognition relies on hybrid

[83] Yaniv Voller, 'Contested Sovereignty as an Opportunity: Understanding Democratic Transitions in Unrecognized States', *Democratization*, 22:4 (2015), pp. 612, 614.
[84] James Ker-Lindsay, 'Engagement without Recognition: The Limits of Diplomatic Interaction with Contested States', *International Affairs*, 91:2 (2015), pp. 267-285.
[85] Daase et al. (2015) pp. 125-140. See James R. Crawford, *The Creation of States in International Law* (2nd ed) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

diplomatic practices and seeks a combination of conventional-legal and social-relational forms of international/transnational recognition.[86]

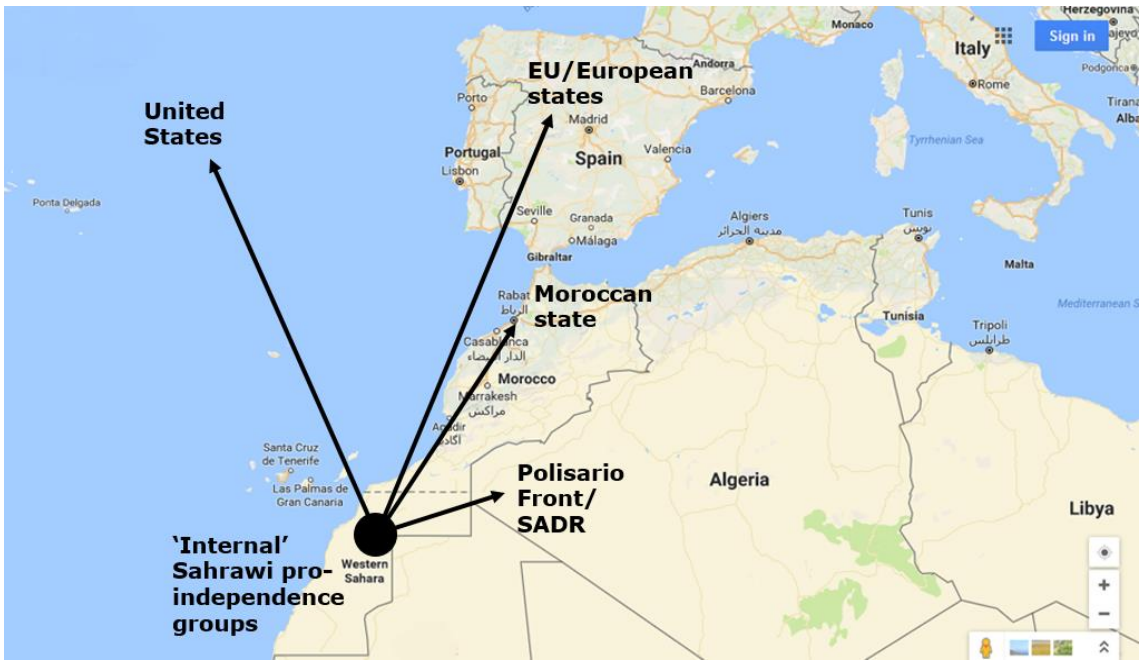
Thirdly, when it comes to non-state actors of frozen conflicts, relations of recognition tend to be on the whole transnational, as the significant others with whom they engage – contested state, parent/annexing state, patron state and international actors – are located on different levels of analysis, and multiple mutual influences and cross-level interactions occur between parallel recognition dynamics. Most prominently, there is an inevitable tension between recognition from the contested state and parent/annexing state, which reflects the practical alternative between pursuing the 'politics of recognition' 'via *secessionist* efforts […] or […] via demands for complete administrative self-governance as *autonomy* for a political entity within a given state'.[87] At the same time, recognition from the international community may influence that of either the parent/annexing state or the contested state by creating – through mechanisms such as international socialisation – a 'transnational structure pressuring such governments simultaneously "from above" and "from below", hence minimising options for repression'.[88]

In the case of the internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups whose emergence as a new non-state conflict actor is examined in this article, recognition from the Moroccan state is a necessity as part of the *domestic* political constraints imposed by this country's annexation – i.e. full territorial and administrative incorporation – of (three quarters of) Western Sahara. Whatever the preferences of various internal Sahrawi actors and the view of international law, which regards Western Sahara as a non-self-governing territory

[86] Bouris and Fernández-Molina (2018).
[87] Daase et al. (2015) p. 183, emphasis in original.
[88] Voller (2015) p. 614.

awaiting decolonisation, the facts on the ground are that Morocco has acted there as the sole *de facto* governing authority since 1976/1979. By contrast, the internal Sahrawi nationalists' struggle for recognition from the Polisario Front/SADR occurs on a *national yet cross-border and extraterritorial* level. Both the national liberation movement formally recognised by the UN as 'the representative of the people of Western Sahara'[89] and the contested state it proclaimed in 1976 are mostly based in exile, in the Tindouf refugee camps in Algeria. Finally, recognition from what is here referred to as the international community – a shortcut for the UN and mainly Western actors such as the United States, the European Union (EU) and key European states – belongs to a wider *global* level.

Figure 1. Transnational relations of recognition and significant others for internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups



[89] UN General Assembly, A/RES/34/37 (21 November 1979).

5. Transnational mechanisms of recognition for the internal Sahrawi nationalists

This section aims to complete the building of the typology of causal mechanisms of transnational recognition involved in the constitution of conflict actors in frozen conflicts by incorporating inductive insights from the empirical case study. The case study examines the emergence and constitution (collective identity formation and social status building) of internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups as a new non-state conflict actor in the frozen conflict of Western Sahara by means of their transnational recognition struggles and responses thereto from three significant others – the Moroccan state, the Polisario Front/SADR and the international community. Evidence is drawn from semi-structured individual and group interviews with prominent activists from all the significant pro-independence Sahrawi civil society organisations active in the Moroccan-annexed Western Sahara territory, which I conducted in the capital city Laayoune in June 2013. The main limitations of these data stem from the stifling Moroccan security control in this hard-to-research field[90] and my lesser direct access to the views of the three significant others during this trip. However, my interviews included several Moroccan academics and think tankers in Rabat and Casablanca as well as the head of the regional commission of the Moroccan National Human Rights Council (CNDH) in Laayoune. Additional data about the significant others' motivations stem from my previous research on Moroccan foreign policy and the interplay between this state's *domestic* and international management of the Western Sahara conflict,[91] the multilevel analysis of this conflict[92] and the role of the EU therein.[93]

[90] Fernández-Molina (2015) p. 237.
[91] Irene Fernández-Molina, *Moroccan Foreign Policy under Mohammed VI, 1999-2014* (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 46-75.
[92] Fernández-Molina (2017a).
[93] Irene Fernández-Molina, 'The EU, the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Western Sahara Conflict: Executive Continuity and Parliamentary Detours', in Dimitris Bouris and Tobias Schumacher

The typology in Table 1 classifies mechanisms of recognition, i.e. the pathways or processes whereby responses to the internal Sahrawi nationalists' struggles are produced, by combining the two dimensions – forms of recognition and significant others. Although the range of potential significant others in a frozen conflict context is wider (see above), the list here is limited to those that play a most relevant role in this particular case. Similarly, causal mechanisms are identified on an inductive, case-specific basis, and do not purport to be exhaustive.

Table 1. Causal mechanisms of transnational recognition for (non-state) conflict actor (internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups) in frozen conflict (Western Sahara)

			Significant others		
			Annexing/parent state	Contested state	International community
			Morocco	Polisario Front/ SADR	UN, US, EU
Forms of recog-nition	Non-normative	Thin cognitive recognition	Media coverage	-	Media coverage
	Normative	Respect (equal rights)	International socialisation	Competitive recognition	Official on-the-ground engagement

(eds) *The Revised European Neighbourhood Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017b), pp. 219-238.

		Esteem (difference)	Institution-building and co-optation	-	-
		Love (empathy)	-	Civil society and people-to-people contacts	Civil society and people-to-people contacts

5.1. Thin cognitive recognition from the annexing state and the international community through media coverage

Internal Sahrawi nationalists supportive of independence and/or the Polisario Front/SADR within the Moroccan-annexed Western Sahara were denied to even exist for nearly two decades. After half of their country people fled into exile in the Tindouf refugee camps upon the outbreak of the conflict in 1975-1976, and the territory became virtually isolated, the Moroccan state acted as though none of them was left there. Secretly detained activists were subject to one of the most extreme forms of disrespect at the level of physical integrity discussed by Honneth, i.e. torture.[94] At the same time, these Sahrawis were simply invisible for the international community and politically sidelined by the Polisario Front/SADR leadership in exile in Algeria. The only primary form of recognition they enjoyed was the 'love' provided by their relatives and friends privately – and locally, as most Sahrawi families were divided. Starting from this situation of utter disrespect, two practical conditions were required for their first struggles for recognition to begin in the early 1990s: the freezing of the conflict and the cognitive

[94] Honneth (1995) p. 132.

acknowledgement of their existence and autonomy by the Moroccan annexing state and the international community.

The first step towards this thin or minimal cognitive recognition, lacking normative implications, was Morocco's first-ever release of Sahrawi political prisoners and 'disappeared', whose existence had been denied until then, in the context of the 1991 UN Settlement Plan and the deployment of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). By being freed, these 240-300 Sahrawis who had been in Moroccan secret detention centres since 1976 or 1988[95] were, most importantly, *acknowledged to exist*. This started to constitute the identity of the embryonic conflict actor they were at the time, first and foremost, as *victims* of the Moroccan state, their primary significant other. Such is the positionality suggested by the name adopted in 1994 by the first informal grouping formed by these activists upon their return to Western Sahara, i.e. Coordination Committee of Sahrawi Victims of Enforced Disappearances (henceforth the Coordination Committee). Once they returned home and recovered their basic self-confidence through the 'love' from their families, these victims' experience of disrespect pushed them to engage in a wider struggle for recognition. Before growing into a struggle for rights, this was essentially a 'struggle for dignity' whereby the new actors fought their 'denial of agency', 'rooted in asymmetrical interaction patterns'.[96] For instance, the first major action the Coordination Committee undertook was to dispatch a clandestine

[95] Stephen Zunes and Jacob Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2010), p. 144-145. Carlos Martín Beristain and Eloísa González Hidalgo, *El oasis de la memoria: Memoria histórica y violaciones de derechos humanos en el Sáhara Occidental* (San Sebastián: Universidad del País Vasco/Hegoa, 2012), vol. 1, p. 216.
[96] Thomas Lindemann, 'Recognizing (mis)Recognition from the Inside *and* the Outside: Some Criteria for 'Seizing' a Slippery Concept', *Global Discourse*, 4:4 (2014), pp. 542, 546.

delegation to Rabat with the aim of simply make themselves known, establishing contacts with Moroccan opposition groups and foreign actors.[97]

The causal mechanism behind the Moroccan decision in the 1991 prisoner release is unclear for lack of evidence. What is apparent, however, is that from the late 1990s onwards, it was media coverage of the budding struggle for recognition inside Western Sahara that acted as the mechanism driving thin cognitive recognition of internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups, both by the Moroccan state and further afield. The opening episode was a wave of Sahrawi protests that broke out in Laayoune in September 1999 – the first ever to be put on front pages by some Moroccan media. Met with violent repression, what began as a peaceful sit-in of Sahrawi students expressing social demands escalated into several weeks of riots. The unprecedented scope of these events led the then young and vibrant Moroccan 'independent press', which was actively pushing the official 'red lines' including on Western Sahara,[98] to give them widespread coverage. This can be viewed as an act of thin cognitive recognition that, as a matter of simple fact, unrest *existed* in Western Sahara. The limit was that such recognition was kept minimal and carefully depoliticised at the official level. Moroccan media received explicit governmental instructions to frame these protests as exclusively driven by socioeconomic grievances, refraining from attributing to them any 'political' or Sahrawi nationalist content. As put by a Moroccan minister, 'one can be Moroccan and be in rage'.[99] Even just at the non-normative level of thin cognitive recognition, this amputated framing involved a good deal of misrecognition and therefore fuelled renewed, up-levelling Sahrawi struggles.

[97] Martín Beristain and González Hidalgo (2012) vol. 2, pp. 229, 444.
[98] Interview with former Sahrawi FVJ leader, Rabat, June 2013.
[99] Fernández-Molina (2016) p. 50.

It took half a decade and another larger and more widely mediatised Sahrawi protest-riot cycle to get some Moroccan acknowledgement of the existence of internal 'separatists' cast in overtly political terms. The so-called Sahrawi 'intifada' that erupted in Laayoune in May 2005 not only represented a quantitative leap in terms of mobilisation, organisation, duration and geographical spread, but also a political turning point. This time, the protests included the open use of pro-independence symbols, and received greater attention from international as well as Moroccan media.[100] Still, even in the face of such upgrade, Moroccan cognitive recognition of internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups would remain partial and tainted by disrespect, insofar as the activists concerned were persistently denied of agency, represented as 'agents' and a 'fifth column' of the Polisario Front and Algeria rather than an autonomous social movement.

In fact, the 2005 'intifada' was more important for the internal Sahrawi groups' struggles for recognition vis-à-vis their other two significant others. Media coverage was also the causal mechanism that enabled the internal Sahrawi nationalists to be noticed as conflict actors by the international community. By this point, rather than mass media, it was the internet that became instrumental for the global dissemination of images of the brutal Moroccan crackdown against Sahrawi demonstrators. They took them themselves with digital cameras or mobile phones, and thus framed in their own, often nationalist, terms. The most impactful move in this regard was the smuggling of a small camera into the Black Prison in Laayoune which produced pictures, subsequently spread online, of the inhuman conditions in which the arrested activists were kept.[101] Their struggle for

[100] Fernández-Molina (2015) p. 240.
[101] Interview with ASVDH leader, Laayoune, June 2013. Interview with former political prisoners arrested during 2005 'intifada', Laayoune, June 2013.

international cognitive recognition would later be further advanced through the crises provoked by the expulsion and hunger strike of the Sahrawi activist Aminatou Haidar in 2009, and the protest camp set up at Gdeim Izik, Laayoune, in 2010. The importance for activists of the mere acknowledgement of their existence in the outside world is nicely illustrated by the title of a documentary film about one of the Gdeim Izik prisoners, *Tell Them I Exist* (2016). Meanwhile, when it comes to the Polisario Front/SADR, the internal Sahrawi groups had no need of cognitive recognition as such; they had not been forgotten. Yet, the 2005 'intifada' helped the exiled Sahrawi national leadership realise their political potential in a critical moment of diplomatic deadlock and frustration.

5.2. Recognition as 'respect'/equal rights from the annexing state through international socialisation

Their burgeoning cognitive recognition, combined with persistent Moroccan disrespect, motivated internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups to extend their struggle to the domain of rights, engaging in fights for freedom of association and for the Moroccan state's accountability and reparation for the gross human rights violations committed throughout the Western Sahara conflict. The Moroccan state responded with a number of rights-based recognition measures directed towards the entirety of the Sahrawi population of the annexed territory – yet as Moroccan citizens/subjects. In other words, rather than involving mutuality and genuine acceptance of the other, these were largely policies of assimilation seeking to 'normalise the other by reducing them to oneself'.[102] Neither did they correspond to the normative ideal of recognition in terms of causal mechanisms, as they were mostly driven by instrumental rationality. It is here that the transnational

[102] Brincat (2014) p. 399.

connection comes into play. The two processes leading the Moroccan state to extend equal rights and state-wide human rights policies to the internal Sahrawis were the latter's growing recognition by the international community and Morocco's international socialisation in the form of 'role playing'.[103] Role-playing refers to learning what is socially accepted and expected within the context of an asymmetric relationship – such as those that Morocco maintains with its Western foreign policy allies – and adopting new roles accordingly, without necessarily involving normative persuasion.[104] Greater respect for the civil and political rights of the Sahrawis living in under Moroccan rule belongs to the external normative expectations that the authorities in Rabat felt compelled to live up to, in order to grant credibility to their 'democratic transition' discourse and to internationally legitimise their new plans of autonomy (under Moroccan sovereignty) for Western Sahara.

The first policy step in this direction, soon after King Mohammed VI's accession to the throne in 1999, was the establishment of an Independent Arbitration Committee with the aim of closing down the issue of the human rights violations of the reign of his father, King Hassan II, by providing material compensations to the victims. Although it did not specifically target them, the appearance of a limited transitional justice mechanism immediately appealed to the internal Sahrawi nationalists who had precisely formed a collective identity as human rights victims. The Coordination Committee responded by submitting a joint collective application including some 1,200 files on human rights violations, though emphasising the need for truth and justice in addition to compensations.[105] The neglect of the second demand turned the first Moroccan act of

[103] Jeffrey T. Checkel (ed.), *International Institutions and Socialization in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 9-14.
[104] Fernández-Molina (2016) pp. 101-102.
[105] Martín Beristain and González Hidalgo (2012) vol. 2, pp. 267-269.

rights-based recognition into a mere one-sided pecuniary transaction, and therefore more of a form of misrecognition. Thus, counterproductively for Moroccan interests, the policy contributed to bringing together internal Sahrawi nationalists in their new struggle for rights, led to a shift in these groups' collective identity from mere victims to human rights *activists*, and expanded the horizon of their significant others to the international sphere.

Another example of the limits of the expansion of political rights for internal Sahrawis and the stepping-up of the latter's recognition struggles was the short-lived adventure of the Sahara Section of the Forum for Truth and Justice (FVJ). The FVJ was a quite militant and pluralist Moroccan civil society group that emerged in the same context of Moroccan 'transitional' politics and was unprecedentedly open to Sahrawi activists. Its Sahara Section, established in Laayoune in 2000, became the first legal and fully operational independent civil society organisation in the Moroccan-annexed Western Sahara that mostly consisted of Sahrawi members[106] because, as one of them noted, 'the FVJ was an association of victims'.[107] However, the involvement of noted pro-independence activists and the denunciation of present-day human rights violations, including briefings provided to international delegations (the transnational element), created constant strain with the Moroccan authorities and the FVJ's central executive board in Rabat. The FVJ's Sahara Section was eventually dissolved by the Laayoune Court of First Instance in 2003 on the grounds that it was using 'human rights as a cover to pursue both violent and diplomatic "separatist" activities'.[108]

[106] Interview with HRW research assistant, Rabat, June 2013.
[107] Interview with former Sahrawi FVJ leader, Rabat, June 2013.
[108] Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights in Western Sahara and in the Tindouf Refugee Camps* (New York: HRW, 2008), pp. 99-101.

A second phase of rights-based recognition policies driven by Morocco's international socialisation started in 2004, when Mohammed VI raised the transitional justice stakes in keeping with global norms. A full-fledged truth commission was put in place to redress the 1956-1999 abuses – though still in the contradictory context of persisting authoritarianism. The so-called Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) aroused an unusually strong response and expectations among Sahrawi victims-activists, who accounted for as much as 23 per cent of the complainants. In 2005, former members of the Coordination Committee created the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Gross Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State (ASVDH). Yet, all of this excitement was doomed to result in even greater disappointment. Not only was Western Sahara excluded from the collective reparations programme devised for some Moroccan regions, but also the public hearing scheduled in Laayoune was eventually cancelled, and the Sahrawis were almost absent from the other hearings. Later on, when the IER's report and lists of victims entitled to individual compensation were released in 2006 and 2010, the Sahrawi activists felt they had been just 'treated like numbers'.[109] The IER failed as a rights-based recognition policy as, 'rather than addressing the particular breadth of violations suffered by Sahrawis, [it] increased their feelings of marginalisation'.[110] This disrespect in the form of 'denial of rights'[111] had the effect of reinforcing their identity as an excluded political subject apart from *equal* Moroccan human rights victims and activists. They were also *activists involved in an unsolved conflict*, as suggested by the ASVDH's founding motto – 'no justice without truth, no reconciliation without a global solution' – and confirmed by the unleashing of a critical chapter of their struggle for recognition, the 2005 Sahrawi 'intifada'. The aftermath of the 'intifada' also saw another

[109] Interview with ASVDH leaders, Laayoune, June 2013.
[110] Amnesty International, *Broken Promises: The Equity and Reconciliation Commission and its Follow-up* (London: Amnesty International, 2010), pp. 5-6.
[111] Honneth (1995) p. 133.

more militant internal Sahrawi pro-independence group emerge. Haidar and other figures of the best-connected civil society elite of the territory, all former members of the dissolved FVJ's Sahara Section, founded the Collective of Sahrawi Defenders of Human Rights (CODESA) in 2007.

By 2011, when the Arab Uprisings and the Gdeim Izik protest led to a third phase in Morocco's rights-based recognition policies for the Sahrawis, the head of the Laayoune regional commission of the refurbished Moroccan National Human Rights Council (CNDH) no longer hid that the human rights issues he dealt with were embedded in a 'political conflict'.[112] In any case, Rabat's new measures appeared to be more than ever driven by instrumental rationality in the face of new US pressure over human rights in the Western Sahara territory. This was made clear by leaks of a secret verbal agreement reached by Mohammed VI and President Barack Obama in November 2013, whereby the latter committed himself to stopping seeking the UN Security Council's extension of the MINURSO mandate to monitor human rights in exchange for Morocco making three specific concessions: allowing the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to visit Western Sahara, putting an end to military trials of civilians and authorising Sahrawi civil society organisations deprived of legal status.[113] The first two conditions were met, at least formally, in the ensuing years. Technical missions of OHCHR visited Laayoune and Dakhla in 2014 and 2015. A new Code on Military Justice ending military trials of civilians was passed in 2015, which led the Moroccan Court of Cassation to order the full retrial of 23 Sahrawis convicted by a military court in the Gdeim Izik case. [114] Still, with regard to the legalisation of Sahrawi associations,

[112] Interview with CNDH Regional Commission president, Laayoune, June 2013.
[113] Fernández-Molina (2016) pp. 71, 209.
[114] See Reports of the Secretary-General on the Situation Concerning Western Sahara S/2015/246 (p. 12), S/2016/355 (pp. 15-16) and S/2017/307 (p. 13).

Moroccan rights-based recognition remained restrictive. Only the ASVDH was verbally authorised and allowed to open an office in Laayoune in 2015-2016, while CODESA and others stayed in legal limbo.[115]

These were the last of a series of partial and half-hearted Moroccan rights-based recognition policies driven by 'role playing' mechanisms of international socialisation and seeking the assimilation of the Sahrawi other rather than proper mutuality. Such strategic approach turned out to be largely self-defeating for Moroccan interests because, as expected by Honneth's theory, it created new Sahrawi experiences of disrespect and generated ever-growing struggles for recognition.

5.3. Recognition as 'respect'/equal rights from the contested state through competitive recognition

In parallel to these dynamics playing out within the domestic Moroccan state sphere, though with transnational connections, internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups also started to struggle for greater recognition from the Polisario Front/SADR on the national-extraterritorial level. In this relationship, the triggering experience of disrespect occurred mainly in the form of 'denial of rights', or 'being structurally excluded from the possession of certain rights within a society'.[116] On the part of the Polisario Front/SADR, the timing of the rights-based recognition measures adopted suggests that they arose in response to those of the Moroccan state and the international community – the two other significant others. Thus, the causal mechanism at work here may be seen as one of competitive recognition involving strategic calculation. The rising international salience

[115] EFE, 'La primera asociación saharaui independentista abre su sede en El Aaiún', *EFE* (19 May 2016).
[116] Honneth (1995) p. 133.

of the issue of human rights within the Moroccan-annexed territory pushed the Polisario Front/SADR to try and capitalise on this newfound publicity. They did so by turning it into the cornerstone of a new diplomatic strategy while preventing Moroccan co-optation attempts of internal Sahrawi activists, as well as the Sahrawi population at large. At the same time, in spite of this instrumental rationality, the Polisario Front/SADR's rights-based recognition was arguably much more sincere and genuine in terms of mutuality than that of the Moroccan state, which explains its differing, unity-building effects.

Polisario Front/SADR rights-based recognition started to materialise from 2009 onwards in response to the internal Sahrawi groups' agency. The turning point was a groundbreaking official visit to the Tindouf refugee camps by seven internal Sahrawi pro-independence leaders from the most prominent organisations (ASVDH, CODESA), who wanted to test the limits of the increased freedom of movement granted at the time by Rabat[117] in order to overtly engage with the Polisario Front/SADR's leadership.[118] In spite of the Moroccan arrest of the so-called 'group of seven' upon their return home, this two-week mission set a precedent and became the first of a series of increasingly frequent and visible official trips from Laayoune to Tindouf. More importantly, internal Sahrawis had broken a taboo which would gain them the right to directly participate in the Polisario Front's grassroots political organ, the Popular General Congress (PGC), on an equal footing with their refugee counterparts. Convened every four years, the PGC elects the national liberation movement's National Secretariat and secretary-general, who in the absence of other parties, also holds the state-like position of president of the SADR.[119] Although the constituencies entitled to designate delegates for the PGC had already

[117] Interview with former Sahrawi FVJ leader, Rabat, June 2013.
[118] Interview with CODESA leaders, Laayoune, June 2013.
[119] Alice Wilson, *Sovereignty in Exile: A Saharan Liberation Movement Governs* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), pp. 75-76.

included the 'occupied territories' and diaspora communities on previous occasions, it was only at the 13th PGC, held in Tifariti in December 2011, that representatives from Moroccan-annexed Western Sahara actually attended for the first time since 1991.[120] The internal Sahrawi delegation comprised 54 activists from organisations such as CODESA, ASVDH and others, who enjoyed the same voting rights as the rest of the congress delegates,[121] and were engaged in the so-called Commission for the Occupied Territories and the Intifada of Independence.[122] With all of its competitive and strategic dimension, this inter-Sahrawi recognition actually brought about reciprocity and equal political participation rights, forging a quite durable and effective alliance.

5.4. Recognition as 'respect'/equal rights from the international community through official engagement on the ground

When it comes to the third significant other, the international community, the principal causal mechanism of recognition as 'respect' or equal rights for the Sahrawi population of the Moroccan-annexed Western Sahara in general, and internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups in particular, has been official presence and engagement on the ground from both foreign states and international organisations. This has not supposed a straightforward expansion of rights in the legal-institutional sense, given the absence of international governance mechanisms at the local level, but has countered the inclination towards neglect and unequal treatment that has characterised the international management of the Western Sahara conflict.[123] As much as international actors generally

[120] Ibid. p. 253.
[121] Interview with CODAPSO leader, Laayoune, June 2013. Interview with CSPRON leaders, Laayoune, June 2013.
[122] Sahara Press Service 'XIII Congreso del Frente Polisario: rectifican la labor de la Comisión de los Territorios Ocupados', *SPS* (20 December 2011).
[123] Fernández-Molina (2017a) pp. 4-5.

limit their interaction with contested states and associated non-state actors in order to prevent indirect or creeping recognition implications,[124] the minimal official foreign engagement with the actors based within the disputed territory stands out as exceptional and unparalleled when compared to most other frozen conflict settings. Therefore, what the internal Sahrawis sought in their struggle for recognition was to gain the 'right' to be treated and engaged in the same way as analogous groups of population.

The earliest act of international recognition along these lines was the establishment in 1991 of the MINURSO. This was a UN peacekeeping mission akin to those deployed in other conflicts around the world, whose headquarters were – significantly – located in Laayoune, inside the then-isolated Moroccan-annexed Western Sahara. The UN's presence on the ground had an immediate impact on the identity formation and social status of internal Sahrawi nationalists as a new conflict actor, as it encouraged them for the first time to come out and express their grievances, especially about forced disappearances, after having stayed silent since the conflict's outbreak in 1975. Indeed, this was true even during the exploratory phase that preceded MINURSO's deployment as such. The first Sahrawi demonstration on record was convened on the occasion of a visit to Laayoune and Dakhla by a technical commission of the UN and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1987. This was an enormous novelty as, 'during the 1980s, the Sahrawi population was unable to even imagine the possibility of a public demonstration'.[125] Subsequently, the mere presence of the MINURSO in Laayoune would arouse new struggles for recognition. For example, the UN mission received denunciation letters from Sahrawi human rights abuse victims,[126] even though it was not officially

[124] Ker-Lindsay (2015).
[125] Martín Beristain and González Hidalgo (2012) vol. 1, p. 354.
[126] Interview with siblings of killed Sahrawi activist, Laayoune, June 2013.

mandated to have any contact with the local population or responsibility in human rights matters.[127]

Twenty years later, the internal Sahrawi struggle for rights vis-à-vis the international community would concentrate on the disrespect entailed by the anomaly that the MINURSO mandate did not include human rights monitoring unlike all contemporary UN peacekeeping missions. Initiatives to redress this perceived international unfairness or 'denial of rights' became the core subject of discussion at the yearly UN Security Council debates on Western Sahara from 2009 onwards. They were temporarily supported by the Obama administration, and possibly reinforced by the universalistic 'Arab Spring' framing of the Sahrawi Gdeim Izik protest of 2010.[128] These developments made an indirect, transnational impact on Moroccan rights-based recognition policies towards the Sahrawis, as shown above. Just as importantly, they also precipitated a quite exceptional series of official UN trips to the disputed territory. November 2012 saw the – surprisingly – first ever visit by an UN Secretary-General's personal envoy for Western Sahara to Western Sahara proper. Personal Envoy Christopher Ross's interlocutors there included pro-Moroccan actors, local authorities and tribal *sheikhs* as well as internal pro-independence activists. 'I met Ross' would become the proud leitmotif of my interviews with activists one year later,[129] illustrating the value attached to this form of international recognition as 'respect'. More technical OHCHR visits followed in 2014 and 2015. Subsequently, however, Morocco succeeded in refusing to allow Ross to return to Western Sahara. The visit of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced in

[127] Interview with MINURSO officials, Laayoune, June 2013.
[128] Fernández-Molina (2015) p. 243.
[129] Interview with ASVDH leaders, Laayoune, June 2013. Interview with CODAPSO leader, Laayoune, June 2013.

2016[130] was also eventually cancelled.[131] In fact, Moroccan resistance and fear over the potential damage these visits could cause is testament to the extent to which recognition by the international community in the form of 'respect'/equal rights was contributing to the constitution of internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups as an increasingly central conflict actor.

5.5. Recognition as 'esteem'/difference from the annexing state through institution-building and co-optation

In parallel to all these transnational recognition dynamics revolving around rights since the late 1990s, the Moroccan state also pursued a series of policies of recognition of difference, or recognition as 'esteem', with the aim of winning the hearts and minds of the broader Sahrawi population of the annexed Western Sahara territory. These policies differed from the half-hearted rights-based recognition measures discussed above in that they intentionally placed the emphasis on the particularity of Saharan/Sahrawi/Hassaniya identity. Yet, crucially, this was construed and promoted in exclusively cultural-linguistic, folkloric and apolitical terms – with the additional effect of blurring the lines between ethnic Sahrawis from the south of Morocco proper and from Western Sahara. There was no room for any political recognition of Sahrawi *national* difference, for this would directly clash with the strictly one-nation conception of the Moroccan state. In Honneth's terms, the limit to the reciprocal bonds of trust and solidarity that could be woven in such a way was the 'political culture of nationalism' and the prevalence of 'political integration along the lines of the nation-state' as the primary sphere for the

[130] EFE, 'Gira de Ban en dos etapas por el Sahara revela la tensión entre ONU y Rabat', *EFE* (1 March 2016).
[131] Ross' successor Horst Köhler would be allowed to visit Western Sahara in June-July 2018.

formation of the 'we'. Also, compared to the Western societies considered by Honneth, 'esteem' in this context faced the essential hindrance posed by the absence of a democratic public sphere and process of will-formation.[132] As regards causal mechanisms, the main pathway for this type of recognition was a combination of institution-building and co-optation of Sahrawi elite individuals. Most importantly, these measures did not respond to a distinct Sahrawi struggle and were therefore largely one-sided Moroccan efforts devoid of mutuality.

The Moroccan bet on 'esteem' came into being following the 1999 protests in Western Sahara, when the Rabat authorities announced a new era of 'reconciliation' with the Sahrawis, claiming to be turning the page of past repression. In the institutional domain, this translated into the establishment of a Royal Commission for the Monitoring of Saharan Affairs, tasked with hearing complaints about the recent crackdown on protests. The makeup of the commission sought to co-opt some pro-Moroccan Sahrawis, as it combined civilian and military appointees with local elected representatives. In parallel, and relatedly, various Moroccan and foreign actors were beginning to advocate for the idea of autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty as a so-called 'third way' to bring the Western Sahara conflict to a resolution.[133] This also represented a recognition of difference, as political-administrative decentralisation and self-rule were not envisioned for all Moroccan regions across the board, but as an *ad hoc* solution for Western Sahara only.

[132] Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), p. 333.
[133] Fernández-Molina (2016) pp. 50-51.

The same mix of co-optive institutions, autonomy roadmap and 'reconciliation' discourse was upgraded in 2006-2007, in the aftermath the 2005 Sahrawi 'intifada'. This saw the establishment of a Royal Consultative Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) and the drafting of a formal Autonomy Plan for the Western Sahara, which the king submitted to the UN secretary-general and Security Council. In the end, the 2006 Autonomy Plan offered a power-sharing arrangement that differed little from previous UN proposals (the Baker Plans I and II), albeit with the key change that any assumption of transitoriness was removed. Autonomy under Moroccan rule was meant to be the final status solution for the conflict, rather than an intermediate step towards Western Sahara's long-promised self-determination referendum. Rather than its content, therefore, the Autonomy Plan's main novelty lay in the ambitious public relations or 'marketing' campaign that surrounded it, both domestically and internationally.[134] As regards the CORCAS, though set up as an ad hoc consultative body under King Mohammed VI's direct authority, it was made up of appointed Sahrawi notables and members of parliament. It thus provided an avenue for selective elite participation and some illusion of mutuality in the recognition of Sahrawi difference.[135]

The proof that this was far from satisfying the demands of internal Sahrawi nationalists was the stepping-up of their recognition struggle and pro-independence militancy, as evidenced by the creation of CODESA in 2007 and the 'group of seven's visit to Tindouf in 2009 (see above). Subsequent Moroccan partial measures of recognition of difference would include the 2011 Constitution's novel yet vague references to the 'Saharian-Hassaniya component' of Moroccan 'unity', and the preservation of Hassaniya language. The red line that has never been crossed and has remained a persistent source of

[134] Interview with CORCAS member, Rabat, June 2013.
[135] Fernández-Molina (2016) pp. 61-63.

disrespect, however, concerns the persisting ban on party formation on an ethnic or regional basis.

Conversely, from the side of the Polisario Front/SADR, recognition of the internal Sahrawi difference occupied a secondary place for the sake of the unity of the Sahrawi nation and nationalist movement. Although difference was acknowledged and institutionalised in the form of the SADR's Ministry of the Occupied Territories and the Saharawi Community Abroad and the Polisario Front PGC's Commission for the Occupied Territories, the emphasis was placed instead on recognition as 'respect'/equal rights and 'love'/empathy. Something similar occurred with the international community, whose discourse on the uniqueness of Sahrawis primarily referred to the refugees living in the Tindouf camps.[136]

5.6. Recognition as 'love'/empathy from the contested state and the international community through civil society and people-to-people contacts

Although translatable to collective forms of affection, empathy and affiliation, the essence of recognition as 'love' requires close interpersonal relationships. According to the gradation of forms of recognition in Honneth's theory, these actually precede and constitute an essential condition for struggles for 'respect'/equal rights and 'esteem'/difference to arise. Similarly, on the transnational level, 'it is the relational aspect of empathy and emotional engagement in cosmopolitan forms of recognition that are revealed as essential to the development and performance of other forms of recognition, both rights and solidarity'. [137] The causal mechanism enabling this 'love' for

[136] Fernández-Molina (2017a) p. 5.
[137] Brincat (2017) p. 15.

the Sahrawis living under Moroccan rule has been civil society and people-to-people contacts outside the official sphere. While remaining scant with few exceptions from the side of the Moroccan significant other, these contacts have been prolific and instrumental for the internal Sahrawis' emotional reconnection with refugees in the Tindouf camps, as well as for their nurturing and care by international civil society. In both cases, increased freedom of movement across the Moroccan-annexed Western Sahara's borders acted as a vital facilitator of transnational 'love'.[138]

Non-official inter-Sahrawi contacts include those maintained by families and friends, along with human rights groups, trade unions, youth organisations and media. Family meetings were rare and difficult to arrange during the years of armed conflict and Western Sahara's isolation. After the ceasefire, they were increasingly held abroad, especially in neighbouring Mauritania, and through refugees' trips to the Moroccan-annexed territory with Mauritanian identity documents.[139] Family visits also became part of the confidence-building measures sponsored by the UN since the mid-2000s (though suspended in 2014). Still, the most powerful change and vehicle of 'love', since the turn of the millennium, was the rapid expansion of new technologies of information and communication on both sides of the berm. First, mobile phones became widespread, rendering futile the previous Moroccan restrictions on international calls from landlines – which were lifted in 2001 anyway. Second, the internet burst on the scene as a result of the arrival of the first cybercafés in Laayoune.[140] Access in Western Sahara's private households also grew over the subsequent years, as did humble cybercafés in the Tindouf refugee camps.

[138] Ibid. p. 15.
[139] Wilson (2016) pp. 128, 215.
[140] Ironically for the Moroccan authorities, three such cybercafés were opened by the Coordination Committee/ASVDH leader Brahim Dahane with the money of the compensation he had received as a victim from the Independent Arbitration Committee. Interview with ASVDH leader, Laayoune, June 2013.

Recognition as 'love' from the international community to the internal Sahrawi nationalists started to rise following the 2005 'intifada'. This turned thin cognitive recognition into an unparalleled flurry of Western journalists and 'solidarity' delegations trying to enter the Western Sahara territory – and often being expelled from Laayoune airport by the Moroccan authorities. Anyway, the subsequent easing of the Moroccan security grip on the territory facilitated visits and on-the-ground contacts between internal Sahrawi and foreign pro-Sahrawi civil society activists. Prominent internal Sahrawi leaders also began to get invited to participate in events abroad. Best placed in this regard were the CODESA founders, and especially Haidar, who in 2008 would receive the prestigious Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award.[141] Her hunger strike in 2009 was a dramatic bodily struggle for recognition which forcefully raised her profile and her being cherished and cared for by international supporters. In a reciprocal manner, the latter's emotional involvement reinforced the new centrality of internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups as a conflict actor, facilitating international acknowledgement of their neediness and the recognition as 'respect'/equal rights discussed above.

6. Conclusions and broader research agenda

This article has argued that frozen conflicts frequently change, and that recognition is a fundamental driving force in some of their bottom-up relational dynamics. This is particularly the case when a new conflict actor emerges altering the conflict's inner player/party structure. Yet, most of the existing literature on recognition is ill-fitted to capture the workings of struggles for recognition and responses to them under frozen

[141] Interview with CODESA leaders, Laayoune, June 2013.

conflict conditions, as a result of either having a purely domestic focus or neglecting non-state actors. As shown here, in cases such as that of Western Sahara, recognition dynamics are inherently transnational. The concurrent processes and significant others involved, while located on different levels of analysis, causally impact on one another transcending the domestic-international divide. The article has aimed to advance middle-range theorising on frozen conflicts and debates on recognition in IR. It has sought to make a contribution by: developing the nascent concept of transnational recognition in a novel application to (frozen) conflict contexts; unpacking this type of transnational recognition into its constitutive causal mechanisms on the side of both emerging conflict actors and their significant others; confronting the methodological challenge[142] of empirically operationalising recognition theory and Honneth's tripartite division of forms of recognition in a non-normative manner, adding a fourth merely cognitive layer and making some transnational corrections; building a typology of causal mechanisms whereby transnational relations of recognition constitute conflict actors in frozen conflicts; and demonstrating the dual effects of recognition in such conditions.

In the case of Western Sahara, the new actor that has vividly arisen and has reshaped the conflict from the bottom up by struggling for recognition are internal Sahrawi pro-independence groups based within the territory annexed by Morocco. Their coming to the fore has been by no means inevitable, or a necessary consequence of a monolithic Sahrawi national identity understood in an essentialist manner, but rather the product of complex, contingent and ever-moving transnational social interactions. Three significant others and six causal mechanisms of transnational forms of recognition have been identified as playing some role in the constitution of this actor. Media coverage provided internal

[142] Daase et al. (2015) p. 4.

Sahrawi groups with thin cognitive recognition from the Moroccan state and the international community. At the same time, Morocco's international socialisation, the Polisario Front/SADR's competitive recognition, and the international community's official engagement on the ground have instituted different and often conflicting forms of recognition as 'respect', or equal rights. The prevalence of instrumental rationality and the absence of mutuality have led some of these – especially Morocco's – to result in further disrespect and (re)generate internal Sahrawi struggles. The Moroccan state has simultaneously pursued recognition as 'esteem', or difference, by means of institution-building and co-optation strategies. Meanwhile, Sahrawi and international civil society have multiplied more reciprocal efforts with recognition as 'love' and empathy through people-to-people contacts. Most importantly, most of these processes have been mutually dependent. International cognitive and rights-based recognition have been a key factor stimulating Moroccan and Polisario Front/SADR rights-based recognition policies, through the mechanisms of international socialisation and competitive recognition respectively. On a different level, Moroccan recognition of difference has been countered by inter-Sahrawi and international recognition as 'love'.

The effect of such intermingling of recognition processes has been the identity formation and social status building of internal Sahrawi groups as an increasingly distinct and central conflict actor, shifting from *victims* to human rights *activists*, and then to *activists involved in an unsolved conflict*. Consequently, overall, in Honneth's alternative between mutuality and further struggle, outcomes have tilted towards the latter. This may have emancipatory potential from a Sahrawi nationalist perspective, but is far from the 'recognitional peace' expected by the peacebuilding literature on recognition. Instead, it supports the argument that real-world recognition dynamics produce dual and contingent

effects. Due to the multiple, cross-cutting identities that exist in the socio-political world, 'processes of recognition are fractious and unstable, characterised by aggression and self-assertion, as well as affection and the creation of a "we-feeling"'.[143] In particular, partial and one-sided recognition initiatives driven by instrumental rationality and far removed from the ideal of mutuality tend to widen self vs. other differences,[144] increasing feelings of disrespect and triggering new struggles. Conflict contexts involving competition between various significant others tend to stimulate these normatively flawed recognition dynamics, resulting in further conflict complexity.

One final question concerns the extent to which the typology constructed here may be generalisable and applicable to other frozen conflicts. By definition, causal mechanism are not parsimonious universal laws, but rather operate only under certain contextual conditions. Some of the transnational recognition struggles and mechanisms observed in the Western Sahara conflict are likely to be similarly operative in other frozen conflicts, where the absence of large-scale violence allows for a relative institutional stability and thus likewise constituted avenues for non-coercive change.[145] Disentangling their functioning through further single-case or comparative studies based on this typology would thus help make sense of how important frozen conflict dynamics are shaped by experiences of disrespect and recognition relations between various selfs and others – non-state actors, parent state, patron state, regional and international actors. Examples include the processes of national identity formation and nation-building associated with the emergence (e.g. secession) of contested states (e.g. that of Transnistria in 1989-1990, driven by misrecognition of difference by Moldavian elites); subsequent contested state

[143] Julia Gallagher, 'Creating a State: A Kleinian Reading of Recognition in Zimbabwe's Regional Relationships', *European Journal of International Relations*, 22:2 (2016), p. 384.
[144] Greenhill (2008).
[145] Checkel (2013) pp. 15-16.

identity shifts (e.g. those of Northern Cyprus in 2003, associated with a growing engagement with the EU, or the post-2003 Iraqi Kurdistan, shaped by US sponsorship and the massive inflow of Western aid agencies); internal non-state intergroup dynamics in ethnically heterogeneous contested states (e.g. Abkhazia, Transnistria); and social movements and protests in frozen conflicts, either circumscribed within a contested state (e.g. the 'Abkhazian revolution' which overthrew the president in 2014) or arising in the wider conflict setting and transcending national/ethnic boundaries (e.g. the 'Bosnian spring' of 2014, which involved both Bosniaks and Croats).

A closer case to the one addressed here, starred by a non-state actor from a contested state, is that of Turkish-Cypriot civil society and the transnational recognition relations that have aided its growing profile and influence. Being almost solely concerned with the Cyprus dispute, these civil society groups may rightly be viewed as a non-state conflict actor, or a set thereof. Since the 1980s, they have operated not only within the context of an internationally isolated, non-recognised contested state such as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), but also in a largely oppositional relationship to the elites dominating the latter's government. This has led to various forms of domestic misrecognition, including the absence of a legal framework (rights) for civil society activity. While a minority 'hard-line' camp has upheld relations with the patron state (Turkey), mainstream 'moderate' Turkish-Cypriot civil society organisations have struggled for and received substantial recognition from two other significant others: their Greek-Cypriots counterparts in the parent state (Republic of Cyprus) – through bicommunal people-to-people reconciliation initiatives – and the international community (the UN and most notably the EU). EU recognition has taken the form of institutional on-the-ground engagement as well as post-2004 project-based financial

assistance and technical capacity-building. By engaging with this civil society as an alternative non-state avenue to make up for the absence of bilateral relations with the TRNC administration – for fear of creeping recognition – the EU has contributed to turning it into a relevant actor, altering the Turkish-Cypriot domestic power balance and also encouraging inter-Cypriot people-to-people contacts.[146]

[146] George Kyris, 'Europeanization beyond Contested Statehood: The European Union and Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 51:5 (2013), pp. 870-875.