

Section

1

Foreign Recognition of Texas

Main Ideas

1. The Republic of Texas sought foreign recognition in part to ease the threat of war with Mexico.
2. Many Texans favored joining the United States.
3. Several countries recognized Texas independence.

Key Terms

- foreign relations
- diplomatic recognition

Why It Matters Today

The official recognition of Texas independence by other countries was important for a number of reasons, including improving the Republic's economy. Use current events sources to find information about ongoing diplomatic talks today.



TEKS: 4A, 4B, 17C, 21B, 21E, 22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on Texans' efforts to gain recognition of their independence.

The Story Continues

Sailors on the Texas Navy's flagship, the *Independence*, were headed home from New Orleans when trouble struck. Off the Texas coast, the *Independence* encountered two Mexican warships, and a fierce battle began. The *Independence* was soon captured, along with diplomat William H. Wharton and all the Texas sailors. It seemed that no Texans would be safe until Mexico recognized the Republic's independence.



The Quest for Texas Statehood

The relationship between Texas and Mexico was a key issue in the early Republic's **foreign relations**, or dealings with other countries. Mexico refused to acknowledge Texas independence. The Mexicans maintained that Texas was still a state in rebellion against its rightful government.

Texans wanted to resolve their relationship with Mexico to avoid conflicts like the one involving the *Independence*. They hoped that if other nations recognized that Texas was no longer part of Mexico, then Mexico would do the same. This would lessen the chance of war. Most important to the Republic's leaders was **diplomatic recognition** by the United States. Diplomatic recognition is the acknowledgment by one government that another government exists.

Actually, many leaders—including Sam Houston—wanted more than just recognition from the United States. They hoped that Texas could join the United States as a new state. Houston had campaigned for the Texas presidency promising that he would work for Texas statehood, and as president he tried to fulfill that promise. However, U.S. officials did not want to consider annexing Texas. In fact, they were hesitant even to recognize the Republic. U.S. President Andrew Jackson warned Congress that acknowledging Texas independence might anger Mexico. Such an action could lead to a costly war.

Another obstacle to annexation was slavery. In the early 1800s, northern and southern states were at odds over slavery. Northerners who opposed slavery argued against statehood for Texas. They refused to add another state that allowed slavery. William H. Wharton, who had been sent to Washington by President Houston, reported on the debate.

TEXAS VOICES

“The recognition of our independence will certainly take place, but I have not . . . much hopes of our being annexed. . . . Already has the war violently commenced even on the prospect of our annexation.”

—William H. Wharton, letter to Stephen F. Austin, December 11, 1836

As the debate over annexation continued in Washington, Jackson sent Henry Morfit to Texas to learn about conditions in the Republic. Morfit’s report back to the president did not support recognition. He noted that the Republic’s population was too small, that the young nation had too much debt, and that it had too powerful an enemy—Mexico—to stand on its own. Americans were not sure the Republic could last.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea Why was foreign recognition important to the Republic of Texas?

LINKING

Past to Present

The French Legation

After France recognized the Republic, a grand home for French diplomat Alphonse Dubois de Saligny was built in Austin. De Saligny, however, sold the mansion before it was finished. Ownership of the house was passed down through a number of hands until it was finally purchased by the state in 1949. The Daughters of the Republic of Texas restored the mansion and now run it as a museum. Today the French Legation Museum is an Austin landmark.

Why do you think the French built this grand home?



Image Credit: (b) © Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

That's Interesting!

The Pig War

In 1841, pigs found a way into the French Legation, destroying papers and clothes belonging to Alphonse Dubois de Saligny. The pigs also ate the corn set out for his prized horses. When one of de Saligny's servants killed some of the pigs, their owner attacked him. Word of the so-called Pig War spread quickly. Texas newspapers sided with the pigs, "Go it Texas! Viva la pigs!" When government officials refused to punish the pigs' owner to his satisfaction, de Saligny left Texas for a year.

★ Foreign Recognition

Wharton was right. Despite Morfit's report, the United States officially recognized Texas independence. In his last official act as president, Andrew Jackson appointed Alcée Louis La Branche as U.S. minister to Texas in 1837. The Republic sent Memucan Hunt as its first official representative to Washington.

As Wharton had predicted, though, the U.S. government refused to consider annexation. Many Texans were disappointed at the lost chance for statehood. The Republic's leaders, however, were more optimistic. They hoped that having official diplomatic ties with the United States would lead to foreign trade and loans, both of which were needed to improve the Republic's economy. Also, official recognition by the U.S. government might encourage immigration to Texas.

With recognition from the United States secured, Houston sought to establish ties with other countries as well. In 1837 he sent James Pinckney Henderson to Europe to try to gain recognition for Texas. Every country he could get to recognize the Republic's independence would strengthen its position.

In September 1839 France recognized Texas, becoming the first European country to do so. France sent Alphonse Dubois de Saligny as its representative to the Republic. Recognition from Great Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands followed. Texas leaders hoped that official recognition by these nations would pressure Mexico to acknowledge Texas independence as well. When that failed, President Lamar tried both cash payments and threats of force to convince Mexico to recognize the Republic's existence. But Mexico still refused.

Reading Check Analyzing Information Which countries recognized the Republic of Texas as an independent country?



Section 1 Review



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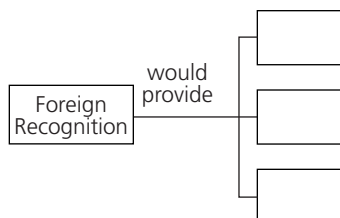
ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- foreign relations
- diplomatic recognition

2. Summarizing

Copy the chart below. Use it to show what Texas might gain from foreign recognition.



3. Finding the Main Idea

- When did the United States and some European nations recognize Texas?
- How did President Lamar try to pressure Mexico into recognizing Texas?

4. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Supporting a Point of View Imagine that you are a Texas representative in Washington. Write a speech to persuade the U.S. government to annex or recognize the Republic.

Consider the following:

- the ties between Texas and the United States
- the conditions in the Republic